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MARKALITE

THE MAGAZINE OF JAPANESE FANTASY

Fall 1991

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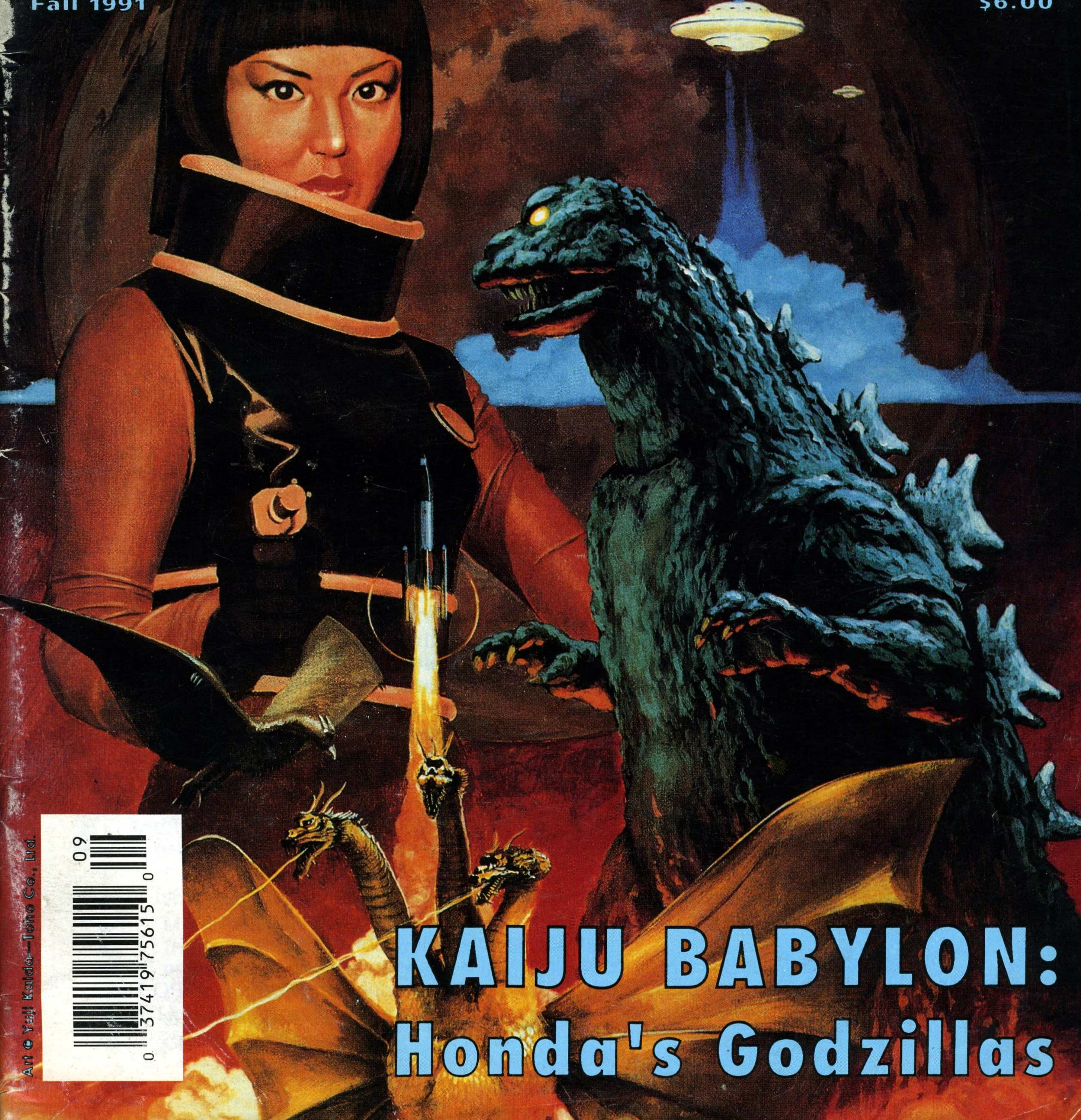

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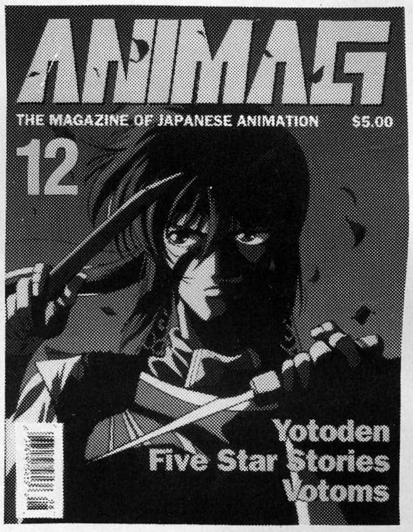
KAIJU BABYLON: Honda's Godzillas



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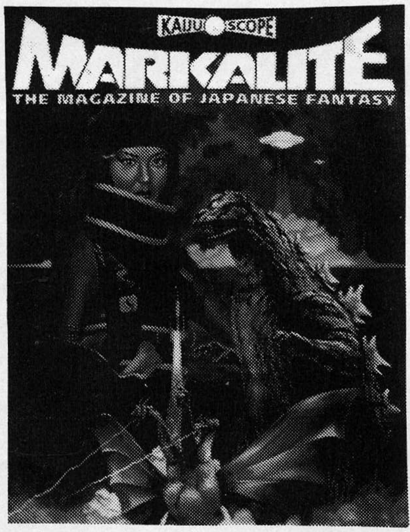

Markalite

The Magazine of Japanese Fantasy

Think about this, just for a second. Have you ever rooted for Godzilla as he transforms Tokyo into a smoking mass of girders, concrete, and destroyed sushi bars? Have you ever yelled "Go Dynaman!" at the team as they dock together? Have you ever hoped in your heart, secretly, that Kamen Rider Black would find his peace?

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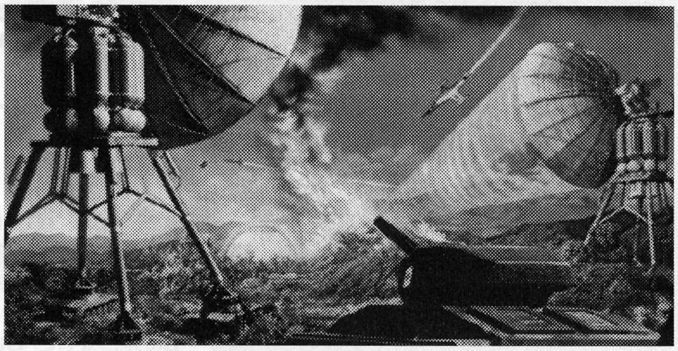
MARKALITE

THE MAGAZINE OF JAPANESE FANTASY

(MAR'KA • LY'TE) *n* : any of giant Flying Atomic Heat Projectors used in the 1957 war against the Mysterians. Dish Gun/Reflector has a diameter of 200 meters.



ISSUE NO. THREE • FALL 1991 • $6.00 (US)

Markalite Closeup

20 KAIJU BABYLON—THE LEGEND OF GODZILLA: THE HONDA YEARS (1954~1965)
a detailed look at the first two cycles by August Ragone

16 GUNHED—SPFX: KAWAKITA BRINGS ROBOTS TO LIFE
behind-the-scenes on Toho's large-scale hitech thriller by Bob Johnson

12 Exclusive Update: GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH
the latest on the 18th entry in the series—including cast, staff and the story by Ed Godziszewski and Guy Tucker.

Features

40 GODZILLA: FIRST IMPRESSIONS
Western critics' views of GODZILLA—KING OF THE MONSTERS! by David Milner

42 KIMBA—THE TRAILS OF TEZUKA'S WHITE LION
how NBC and Mushi Productions unwittingly co-created a classic by Fred Patten

48 Markalite Maiden: YURIKO HOSHI

52 A WALK THROUGH THE MONSTER FILMS OF THE PAST—IN SEARCH OF TOHO SPFX
when did Toho begin? Where did Eiji Tsuburaya get his start?
Markalite presents an article adapted from Uchusen Magazine by Hiroshi Takeuchi

91 IN MEMORIAM
obituaries and farewells for Ichiro Arishima, Susumu Fujita and Shiuo Tagawa

Departments

4 CRANK IN: Editorial
5 MARKALITE MAIL: Letters
8 THE EASTERN FRONT: Markalite News Scope
64 REVIEWS: JETMAN (64), SOLBRAIN (66), SOLAR CRISIS (68), THE GUYVER (72), ROBOT CARNIVAL (76), THE ULTRAMAN STORY (80)
84 SHORTTAKES: Capsule Reviews of Film, Video & Television
94 CRANK UP: Editorial

MARKALITE
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Issue Three/Fall 1991

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CRANK IN

Out With the Old and In With the New...

There's a lot of talk about the new Godzilla. A majority of Japanimation fans on both sides of the Pacific liked, or at least, had kind things to say about GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE; but, any mention of the original series is reduced to "those old movies..."—*yes*, those old movies. It seems that some people will settle for anything as long as it's new and hi-tech... even at the expense of an inadequate script; BIOLLANTE's seeming high praise among them attests to this (although I'm happy that the masses like any Japanese fantasy film).

The first 10 years of Toho's SF/Monster series had what the new and future films will never have again: leaders of vision in the guise of Special Effects Director Eiji Tsuburaya and Director Ishiro Honda. Even their weakest film of the second cycle, MONSTER ZERO, is light-years more entertaining, well-made and rousing than GODZILLA (1984), GUNHED and BIOLLANTE combined. The enduring popularity of their films over the entire world is meatier proof of a solid film, than the disposable whim of a pedestrian fan with a passing fad. Don't let the words "new," "hi-tech," and "old" cloud your sense of wonder.

Mangled prints, tampered editing, canned scores and awful dubbing have marred the reputation of these films in the West for over 25 years—maybe, someday Western viewers will be allowed access to original, letterboxed prints *with* literate subtitles. Until then, we present *Kaiju Babylon*; a feature that analyzes the films discussed, based on the viewing of the original prints, then lets the reader in on some of the differences; some of which are amazing. Enjoy.

The shooting of GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH should be "crank up" by September. Post-production will begin immediately, with the film showing on Japanese screens in December. Some of our staff journeyed back to Toho Studios in late July (some planning a several months stay), in order to cover the behind the scenes activities on the sets and locations of the Big G's latest entry. From all reports we've gotten so far, the film sounds exciting, and will have a few shocking elements for you old-guarders! Read all about it, of course, in our update in this issue, which has just enough to tide you over—until our next installment; find out more on Akira Ifukube's involvement, as well as exclusive info on the film itself and comments from staff and cast members! *Markalite* #5 (March, 1992), will be a special blow-out issue commemorating the release of the new GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH...

Those tired of Godzilla, don't despair; this issue features articles and essays on subjects other than the Big G: KIMBA, ROBOT CARNIVAL, DEVILMAN and others in the animation department; SOLAR CRISIS, ULTRAMAN STORY, JETMAN, and more in the spfx department, the latest on the film industry's recent and forthcoming efforts, and even the first installment in a series adapted from *Uchusen* magazine's expose on the birth of Toho Studios and the special effects industry in Japan.

And that's not all; the magic begins...

August Ragone

Cover: MONSTER ZERO by Yuji Kaida ©Toho Co., LTD.

KUDOS: George Cockle; Damon Foster—Oriental Cinema; Mr. Tohru Hirayama; Shon Howell—General Products USA; Steve James; Johnny Legend; Hiroshi Ohno—Ishimori Pro.; Yoshihiko Shibata; Greg Shoemaker—JFFJ; Michael Stein—Filmfax Magazine; Nobuyuki Sugimoto; Kazuo Sumiya—Toho, Co., Ltd.; Michael Weldon—Psychotronic Magazine; Quang & the gang at Executive Solutions; Special Thanks to Directors Ishiro Honda, Koichi Kawakita, Teruyoshi Nakano, Jun Fukuda and Yoshimitsu Banno, Professors Akira Ifukube and Masaru Sato, Misters Shinichi Sekizawa, Fumio Tanaka, Yoshio Tsuchiya, Kenji Sahara, Akira Kubo and wives for their invaluable time and hospitality. This issue is dedicated to you, the fans of Japanese Fantasy Cinema—now, pat yourselves on the back.

LETTERS

ED-itorial Comments

I think you are definitely on the right course as far as general content is concerned, similar to the philosophy that I always tried to use in [*Japanese Giants*]—cover things that are new to people, or old subjects on which little information is available. Subjects such as the supernatural films, the downfall of animation quality, the lesser superhero shows, etc. offers a wide sampling of what Japanese cinema has to offer. Your staff should be complemented on coming up with such a varied menu, something which I always felt JG lacked and did not have the resources to correct. Not all of these articles were really up my alley, but they deserve the coverage because a lot of people ARE interested in them.

The interviews which you printed are an excellent way for us in this country to get insight into the filmmaking process. Some of the other articles, such as the selection of Godzilla's targets, were also very enjoyable reading. However, I was quite surprised at the errors included in the story synopsis—I assumed that whoever worked on the article had at least SEEN the film, and if so, I can't imagine how such errors could have been made. You should have at least mentioned somewhere alone the line your source and that it was subject to change.

I was quite puzzled as to why so much space was devoted to GODZILLA (1984). In a magazine which (correctly, I think) strives to cover new projects and under-covered subjects such as yours, this article seemed completely out of place.

The lead article on the roots of Japanese SF and Fantasy made some interesting points, but I think that overall it tends to paint the whole genre as something more than it is. The general framework provided by the article is welcome info for one and all to understand a little more of the culture from which such entertainment originates, but lets not get carried away by making it sound like everything had deep philosophical, cultural, or cosmic significance.

I was especially appreciative of the salutes given to some of our favorite figures in the Japanese cinema. The passing of Hirata, Tazaki, and Kimura is sad indeed, and they each deserve a fond farewell. My highest compliments on these pieces.

Overall, #1 was a reasonable start, and I think with a few improvements in the selection and reproduction of photos and some upgrade in quality control, that you have the makings of a nice magazine, something along the lines of which I could only dream about for JG. Stick with a wide variety of news and old subjects which are not common knowledge and you will have a winning formula.

Content-wise, #2 has a lot to offer. Other than the ALIENS article, which did not offer any real information other than to recount what aliens appeared in what films, #2 has a solid mix of articles that are generally informative. Fred Patten does his usual first class job on the GIGANTOR story—both his research and entertaining narrative style make his work always stand out. I especially liked the Robert Dunham interview—it's a pleasure to read some anecdotes about our favorite films from one of the campy figures involved in them. The Yasumaru interview was very good, and I'm sure it will be devoured by your readers. The Making of Godzilla [suits] article is also very good. However, I must take exception to one point in the article—the tail is cast with a metal bar in it, but only for use in extracting the tail from the mold. The bar is NOT left inside the costume; it is removed. Also, the internally lighted fins were used, but all the [Super X2 vs. Godzilla in Uraga Channel] scenes used the traditional animation. The difference in more than obvious—the lighted fins don't have the bluish glow that the animation shows.

I am glad that [ULTRAMAN—TOWARDS THE FUTURE] got some coverage, since its English format should make it so much more accessible to fans in this country.

I am a little puzzled by the inclusion of the DREAMS piece—certainly no one has more respect for the works of Kurosawa than myself, but I find it a bit of a stretch to consider it as material for a magazine on Japanese SF and fantasy. At least, in my opinion, it seems a bit out of place, as the fantasy elements seem to me hardly the stuff of which I expect to see in this medium. Still, the article itself is well thought out and interesting to read.

At last, I am pleased to see some critical review of GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE. Of course, everyone has a different opinion of it, but I was totally taken aback by the venomous tone of Guy Tucker's review. It's one thing to not like a film or several things about it, but I think this kind of review is way off base—you'd think it was for a dreadful film like SIX ULTRA BROTHERS VS. THE MONSTER ARMY. I also found it most peculiar that instead of trying to substantiate his opinions with some facts an thoughts, instead he resorts to name-dropping and narrowly selected comments from others to puff up his position. I find the name-dropping particularly bothersome—a reviewer should be able to state his opinion with his own explanations instead of letting someone else do it for him. What someone else says is irrelevant in a personal view—who cares what someone else said? The place for such quotes is in a comprehensive reporting of the film and its performance, not in a review. I would also take strong exception to the statement that the film was universally rejected by fans—nothing could be further from the truth. Everyone was ready to pan the film before its release based on media reports, but most fans had generally the same reaction—a pleasant surprise. Sure everyone had plenty of problems with various parts of it, but the feeling was that while the Golden Age of monsters hasn't returned, this was at least, a step back in the right direction. Also I think that many of the reviews might be a little different if people had seen a translated copy of the script.

Keep up the good work on *Markalite* and get those photos up to snuff.

Ed Godziszewski
editor *Japanese Giants*
Chicago, IL

—The synopsis of GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE was a translation of materials from Toho—the issue was written, layed out and delivered to the publishers early in 1990—another reason for the proofreading errors, it had to be in the publishers hands on a deadline—a deadline which would not wait; something a professional magazine must suffer with! Because no professional magazines bothered to analyze GODZILLA (1984), and since the reviews were sitting around our desks for six years, we felt that it would help set the context for BIOLLANTE. We included the DREAMS piece because it is a fantasy film, albeit a borderline one. THRONE OF BLOOD, and especially RASHOMON, are frequently classified in the U.S. as fantasy films, even though the fantastic content within is minimal. Guy also had prepared a lengthy treatment to explain his trouble with BIOLLANTE, but due to space, he felt it was more appropriate to drop in a ShortTake. [August Ragone here: Guy and I have had several *lengthy* "discussions" about the film and have had his points very clearly defined to me, and he backed them up with some very heavy observations; obviously, he and I do not agree on this film, and I felt that a very negative review from a genre fan would stir up readers' thoughts. And it did! Guy felt that adding the comments of genre figures would help underline his feelings in the abbriviated amount of space. I speak Japanese, and Omori's scenario still falls short of the power, irony and pathos of even TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA. But that doesn't stop me, for the most part, from enjoying the film.] We were also disappointed in the photo-quality in #1 and #2; we're sure that you'll find that our overall quality control has improved considerably with this issue, and now that you're on our staff Ed, I hope that *Markalite* will evolve in a satisfactory direction for everyone.

Italian Input

Thanx a lot for *Markalite*, believe me, it's wonderful! I enjoyed every part of it and wish you big success; wouldn't it be great if *Markalite* reaches #100!?

From reading the magazine, I thought that maybe you'd be interested in an interview with Mr. Valcuda, the man who hand-tinted the original GODZILLA for it's Italian re-release in the mid-'70s. I'll probably also be able to do an interview with Luigi Cozzi [aka Lewis "Star Crash" Coates—ed.], who was the one responsible for this "Italian Version" of the Honda masterpiece—which includes color A-bomb and Hiroshima footage!

About the stock footage in [GODZILLA (1984)]: I had the same feeling, especially when the long queue of cars explodes in flames—it looks as though it is right out of CATASTROPHE: 1999 (the movie I consider the definitive disaster movie, for its weird moments alone). Unfortunately I don't have a video tape of CATASTROPHE: 1999 to make a direct comparison.

The song "Goodbye My Love", I think, is featured when Goro's yacht approaches the fishing boat assaulted by Godzilla. This song is at least in the Dutch version... What about a detailed feature on those aborted Godzilla projects? I've always only read titles and little info on the plots—I would certainly like to know more!

The news of the 18th Godzilla movie [GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH] is, without a doubt, big news! I can't wait to read more about it! Here in Europe, everyone, at the moment, is going crazy for Hong Kong movies; but, we cannot see anything from Japan—except for cartoons (I like a few of 'em) or porn-erotic videos!

Max Della Mora
Gorezilla magazine
Milano, Italy

—Thanks for you letter of comment; your points are well taken and we'll seriously consider them—others are obviously taken care of by this issue. We would be delighted to hear from you more often—how about coming on board and writing for *Markalite*? How about an outline for an article concerning the European versions of the Godzilla (and other Japanese fantasy films) movies, centering on the Italian version of GODZILLA? What do you think, readers? Thanks for the info on the song in GODZILLA (1984)—We're kicking ourselves for missing that piece of info in the first place! You got us!! The "car queue" scene is lifted right out of 1999, no doubt about it, but the image was reversed when spliced into the new print. As far as the unmade Godzilla films—we have the two-part short story on Nobuhiko Obayashi's proposed A SPACE GODZILLA, should we run it in our pages readers? As soon as we find more info on these aborted projects (such as FRANKENSTEIN VS. GODZILLA and the original story treatment for BIOLLANTE), we'll present a feature based on that information, right here, in *Markalite*. Glad that you enjoyed the piece on GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH; See elsewhere in this issue for an update on this new film!

Acclaim For Actors

I just wanted to send you a quick line to congratulate you on *Markalite*.

Unlike most other psychotronically-flavored magazines *Markalite* is covering pretty much virgin territory. Any cover in past years has been sketchy at best, and usually jokey and inaccurate. What a joy to be a able to associate names with all those beloved faces with which I have spent so many enjoyable hours! Your photo captions and obituary section go a long way to bringing recognition to the unsung heroes of oriental cinema; however I have a suggestion that would be very helpful in further scholarship on the subject—how about starting a running feature in your mag that would present, alphabetically, biographies of all significant oriental actors/actresses, with a photo, and just keep the feature running till you've covered everybody. I'd particularly like to see a feature on the gentleman who played the elderly scientist in the original GODZILLA, had a prominent part in RASHOMON, and has been featured in countless monster films as well [this gentleman is the late Takashi Shimura—ed.].

More info please on WARRIORS OF THE WIND. If the still extraordinary American version is as mangled as you say, I can barely imagine how good the original must be. Also, some info please on how to order Japanese-language (undubbed) versions of Japanese classics, as well as videographies of American versions; what's cut, etc., ala *Video Watchdog*.

Chris Tronerud
Norwood, MA

—Thanks for the suggestions; in fact, we have been working on features dealing with the availability of video titles, Japanese and foreign, as well as a running series of personal biographies of several major figures of Japanese cinema. Your idea of alphabetically going down the line of important figures in the genre is excellent, and something we always have wanted to do—what about it readers, shall we begin? About WARRIORS OF THE WIND—I still haven't seen this version of Hayao Miyazaki's ground-breaking 1983 feature, NAUSICAA OF THE VALLEY OF THE WINDS, and I doubt if I ever will; the original film is an absolute masterpiece, that must be seen by all fans of fantasy cinema. You'll find "what's cut"—sort of—in this issue's coverstory *Kaiju Babylon*; a videography is in the works; and you can order uncut-Japanese versions of films on video, from several sources; check for import laserdisc businesses in you area.

He's Wrong, Pal

Just wanted to tell you what a great magazine you have. The articles on the GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE film were great—they meant a great deal to me, since I'm a big Godzilla fan. Also liked the articles on the Super Robots invading the U.S., and the ShortTakes section dealing with films. You guys did a great job on this magazine.

Any idea when GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE may be released in the U.S.? In the interview with Kenpachiro Satsuma on page 53, he is asked for his last words, and he says, "This is the best of all the Godzilla films. No more 'next'." What does he mean? How can he be sure? Please tell me he's wrong.

David Waite
Tusone, PA

—Mr. Satsuma was speaking about the production attitude; the next line reads, "we [had] to have this kind of an attitude [while shooting the film]." This was so that the staff wouldn't get lazy, and have a next film to fall back on. But to answer your question honestly, he is wrong! As you read this, Toho is about to call "crank up" on its 60th Anniversary film, GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH, read more about the film elsewhere in this issue. As far as BIOLLANTE's release in the U.S.; it is quite uncertain at this time—Miramax Pictures no longer holds the rights to the film—Toho's L.A. office responded to our inquiries with a, "we're still in negotiations...". Stay tuned...

Pilot to Bombardier

You might want to consider having some kind of general "bits & pieces" section for the tiny news blurbs similar to what *JFFJ* used to do. Right now it's scattered all over. Issue 1's *Crank Up* mentioned 3 projects not

LETTERS

mentioned elsewhere as though all your readers knew what MOTHRA VS. BAGAN, etc., was all about! Issue 2's *Crank In* gave a BIOLLANTE and GUNHED release update, while the letters section contained news of upcoming video and Nintendo releases. Wouldn't it be nice to have a place to collect all this kind of stuff?

I have a theory about the alternate version of SPECTREMAN episode #4. The absence of the Americanized elements indicates to me that the episode was a "pilot" prepared by P Productions to interest the English-speaking market. Other possible such "pilots" include the "Mammoth Car" episode of SPEED RACER (which featured some different voice actors and a different title slide from the "checkerboard" motif used for the rest of the series) and the first episode of THE SPACE GIANTS (again with some different voice actors and a preview at the end for the next episode of "Monsters In Outer Space"). This might be the same explanation for the English-dubbed episode of ULTRA Q I found…

While not a big GIGANTOR fan, I enjoyed the article on same. I was fascinated by the history of the show's U.S. version and how the rights were tossed around. I like to hear more about the Americanization of the Toho films, etc. (for instance, when National General went kaput, who got ownership of LATITUDE ZERO? And who has it these days?).

I liked the Robert Dunham interview, and hope that you continue interviewing live action stars from both sides of the Pacific. I'd like to see interviews include a "selective filmography" at the end. How about interviewing Russ Tamblyn? I know he's been interviewed a lot lately, but most of these brush right over his GARGANTUAS work.

The Ultra Series—my only complaint here was your inconsistency in describing and dating the Ultra shorts, etc. i.e. which episodes made up the Ultraman movies; was the ULTRAMAN STORY a documentary? Also, you failed to mention the use of "Capsule Monsters" [mirco-nized benevolent creatures used by Dan Moroboshi in time of crisis or when changing into Ultra Seven is inconvenient—ed.] in ULTRA SEVEN, an innovative approach if I ever heard one.

As pleased as I was to see the review by Bob Johnson on SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN, I was disappointed he didn't go to any length to explain why the film was lost in the U.S. For the record, the U.S. distributor (Hertz-Lyon) only gave the film regional T.V. release in the '60s. Then Hertz-Lyon went out of business and the rights fell into the public domain (presumably).

Lastly, I'd like to see a little more consistency with credit listings. Sometimes you list them, sometimes you don't. I'd like to see more "checklists" of credits (similar to Greg Shoemaker's 1954-1959 *The Toho Legacy* article in *Cinefan*) and select filmographies of actors, directors, composers, etc.

Brian Culver
Boston, MA

—As you can see, we have a news info section entitled *The Eastern Front* in this very issue—this will be a continuing feature of *Markalite.* MOTHRA VS. BAGAN was a film that was going to begin production right after BIOLLANTE; the direction and script were under the auspices of Kazuki Omori, and featured a new monster (Bagan) attacking Japan, and Mothra arriving to save the world. Thankfully the film was never made, as the script reeks to high heaven, and a film would have been presumably worse. The pilot theory you have is true, but interestingly enough, some of those series were dubbed *en todo* for the foreign market. And sometimes only one episode was dubbed. The alternate title you mentioned for THE SPACE GIANTS was MONSTERS FROM SPACE—and was the original title the series was pitched as from P Productions (Lakeside Television purchased it for U.S. distribution). The others would be intriguing to investigate. LATITUDE ZERO was picked up about 10 years ago by Gold Key Entertainment. Space did not allow us to go into the Ultraman shorts and features in detail. Another fact about TELEGIAN—Hertz-Lyon was in such bad shape when they purchased the film, that they could no longer afford theatrical distribution (as originally intended), but they could not even muster the capital to strike color prints!

A Toei Hero a Toei Thereo

Just finished reading *Markalite* #2 and before I say anything else, let me say that I think that it's a noticeable improvement over the premiere issue. On the whole, #2 is a much more well-rounded product than the BIOLLANTE-heavy #1. Most enjoyable were the pieces on KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX, METALDER, LADY BATTLECOP, DREAMS, and Robert Dunham (the Dunham interview is the sort of thing you should strive for, rather than the translated interviews from Japanese magazines).

Criticisms:

Okay, so it's ULTRAMAN's 25th anniversary—But what about KAMEN RIDER? ULTRAMAN was a popular and influential series that spawned many sequels/follow-ups/rip-offs, but it is only now after some ten year absence from the scene that it's getting a revival. Its influence on Japanese Superheroes is all but gone. KAMEN RIDER on the other hand (celebrating its 20th anniversary) has spawned at least as many sequels and after its debut has changed the entire face of the Japanese TV SFX genre. I don't underrate the importance of ULTRAMAN or its achievements, but I very strongly feel that KAMEN RIDER rates more than a couple of short review features.

On a similar note, I think that Toei Studios rates heavy coverage. Toei has been the backbone of the genre for more than ten years now. While we sat waiting years for new Godzilla or Ultraman projects, Toei has been in there year after year producing new programs (Kamen Riders, Sentais, Space Sheriffs, etc.), keeping the genre alive and exciting! Career profiles or interviews with Toei's most prolific idea men Shotaro Ishimori and Saburo Yatsude would be terrific reading!

Finally, you listed the actress from BLACK RX as "Jun Koyamaki". I've had her name translated as "Makoto Sumikawa". Which one is correct? I'm not nitpicking—I'm a big fan of hers from her roles in both RX and SPEILBAN, so I really wanna know! Whatever name, let's see her in the *Markalite Maidens* section!

I look forward to future issues. Best of luck!

Frank Strom
Revere, MA

—We decided on the ULTRAMAN coverage, due to the American public's familiarity with the character (that's why BIOLLANTE was first—everyone knows who Godzilla is) and because it is his silver anniversary. The first few issues have to establish a few familiar faces for the uninitiated public unfamiliar with Japanese Fantasy; we couldn't have run a coverstory on—let's say—SILVER MASK first, because after you hook in your readers with Godzilla and Ultraman, then you can hit them with ROBOT DETECTIVE. Re: Toei. We couldn't have said it better ourselves—Ye Editors have always been BIG fans of Toei since KIKAIDER ran on local TV back in 1975… By the way, Tohru Hirayama is *the man* behind the Toei Hero genre, producing GIANT ROBO as well as KAMEN RIDER. Speaking of which, the making of the first monumental KAMEN RIDER teleseries will be featured in our next issue!

Please mail all editorial questions, comments, criticisms, etc. to
MARKALITE Letters, P.O. Box 6846,
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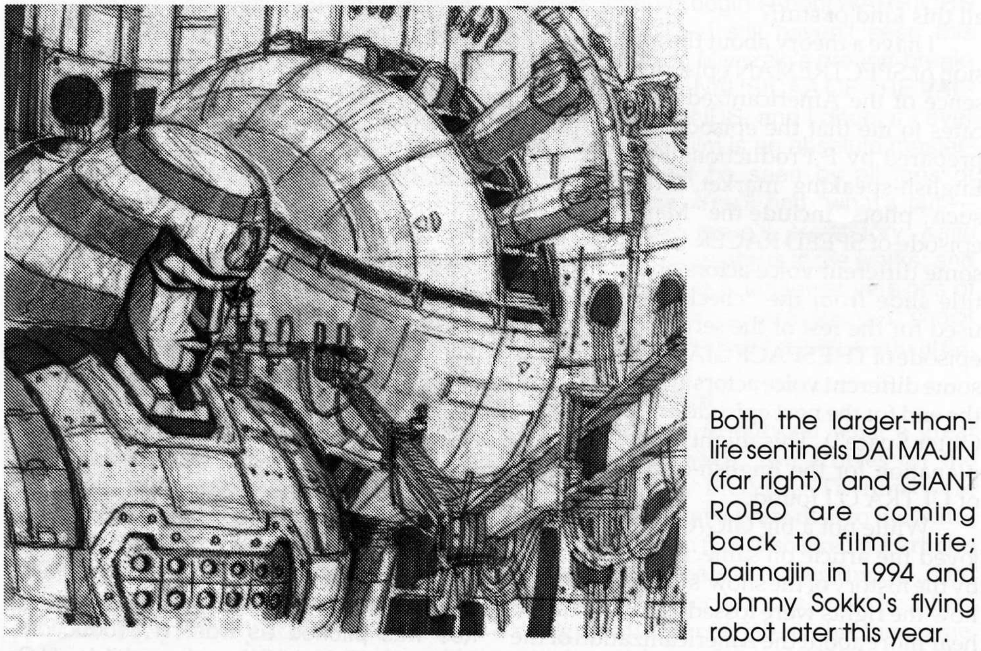
THE EAST

Markalite News Scope



Both the larger-than-life sentinels DAI MAJIN (far right) and GIANT ROBO are coming back to filmic life; Daimajin in 1994 and Johnny Sokko's flying robot later this year.

ON THE HORIZON

•MAJIN STRIKES AT GOLDEN HARVEST

At the Yubari International Adventure/Fantastic Film Festival, Daiei Film Company president Mr. Tokuma, on February 16 of this year, spoke on the 20th Anniversary of Daiei's original closure. And that this anniversary heralded the return of Dai Majin to the big screen in 1994. He also stated that the film would be Daiei's grand venture into the foreign/international market.

In attendance was producer Tony (TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES) Gray of Golden Harvest's American division. The new Majin film will therefore be a co-production between Daiei and Golden Harvest. Featuring an "international" cast and crew, the new MAJIN will begin lensing in 1993. There are no details as of this writing as to the plot, crew, or cast—Daiei is soliciting plot ideas from Japanese fans—but stay tuned to *Markalite* for all the latest details.

•THE BAT-DIRECTOR AND THE PSYCHIC GIRL

Director Tim Burton, in between EDWARD SCISSORHANDS and BATMAN II, will helm the Carolco production of MAI—THE PSYCHIC GIRL, based on the famous Japanese manga written by Kazuo (*Lone Wolf and Cub*) Koike and drawn by Ryoichi (*Crying Freeman*) Ikegami, and released to the U.S. comic market in 1987 by VIZ Communications. The screenplay has been written by the same team responsible for SCISSORHANDS, with Walter Hill (originally announced as director of the property he purchased the filmic rights to) serving as producer.

•"MAZIN-GO!"

World-famous manga author/artist Go Nagai and his Dynamic Productions, responsible for so many violent and engaging characters such as Devilman, Violence Jack, and Cutey Honey, as well as creating the super-robot genre itself, is planning another installment of his premiere robot saga "Mazinger" sextet: MAZINGER Z, GREAT MAZINGER, GETTER ROBO, GETTER ROBO G, UFO ROBO GLENDIZER and GETTER ROBO ROAR. Details are sketchy so far, but Mr. Nagai would like to use his First Comics original graphic-novel *Mazinger* (unreleased in Japan), as the basis of the new project. If all lights are green the new addition to the Mazinger Saga is to be released sometime in 1992.

•FELIX UNGER DIRECTS MONSTERS FOR DAIEI

TICKS is the proposed title for a 4 billion yen "Monster-Action" co-production, that Daiei Film Co., Ltd. is producing. Tony Randall (!) has been signed on for the live action lensing,

ERN FRONT

while spfx will be under the auspices of Doug Beswick. No other details available at press time.

•ULTRAMAN IS "GREAT"!
Due to the success in video sales domestically of ULTRAMAN GREAT (URUTORAMAN GURETO aka ULTRAMAN—TOWARDS THE FUTURE) since its debut last November, Tsuburaya Productions has given the "Go Ahead" for planning the further adventures of Ultraman Great—with a new locale: Japan. This move is dictated by the controversy surrounding TOWARDS THE FUTURE's over-budget price tag o.k.ed by the South Australia Film Commission. The state-owned film company is being investigated by the government on the expenditure of said funds. Of course, this means that the new adventures cannot include the involvement of the SAFC... Tsuburaya Productions, Tsuburaya Film Co., Bandai Video and Sega Enterprises are preparing a new series featuring the new Australian Ultraman, transplanted in Japan with a Japanese cast and crew. There is no word yet if Dore Krause has been asked to carry over his role as Ultraman Great's human identity, Jack Shindo.

IN PRODUCTION

•BATTLE GAL (BATORU GARU)
tentative title
First production on the schedule for Daiei's "Shin Eiga Tengoku" (New Movie Heaven) made-for-video film series. BATTLE GAL stars Cutie Suzuki and a bevy of beautiful female wrestlers vs. an army of murderous zombies. Scenario by Kazuhiko (IKO-CHAN) Takizawa. Release date/ running time undecided.

•GIANT ROBO (JIYAIANTO ROBO)
First installment in a proposed series of OVAs (Original Video Animation—produced for video only) based on the 1968 Toei teleseries, released in the U.S. as JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT. The original characters and situations were created by manga-author Mitsuteru Yokoyama, who also created GIGANTOR (TETSUJIN 28-GO—see article in #2—ed.). Makoto Kobayashi (DRAGON'S HEAVEN) is the image concept deigner. The new animated series is being developed from a story treatment by Yokoyama himself, which replaces Unicorn agent Jerry Mano (aka #U3), with a female companion for young Johnny Sokko's adventures against alien Emperor Guillotine and the Gargoyle Gang. Volume One to berreleased late summer/early fall 1991.

•MIKADROID (MIKADOROIDO)
Co-produced by Toho and Tsuburaya Film Co., this is the first film in the Original Video Movie Series from Toho Video's "Toho Cinepack", written and directed by special effects makeup artist Tomoo Haraguchi, and supervised by genre veteran Akio Jissoji. MIKADROID opens in Tokyo during the last days of WWII, the Imperial Army are putting all efforts into a battle-android project to help turn the tide of the war, but the research lab is destroyed by an allied air-raid. All is forgotten until 1991, when a strange robot appears at the scene of several brutal crimes. Action choreography is being provided by genre fan/pro Hariken Ryu. Music by Kenji Kawai (THE RED SPECTACLES, CERBERUS and DEVILMAN). The 80 min. film will be released in November 1991.

•ZEIRAM (ZEIRAMU)
Gaga Communications. Original Story and Scenario: Keita Amamiya and Hajime Matsumoto. Directed by Keita Amamiya. The story centers on the outlaw creature Zeiram, its flight to Earth, and the three bounty hunters hot on its trail. The movie is film distributor Gaga Communication's first original production, and promises to deliver a stronger impact than Amamiya's own 1988 film FUTURE NINJA. Production wrapped in June 1991. Release date has been set as August 1991.

FANTASY FILM/ TV ROUND-UP

•GETTER ROBO ROAR (GETTA ROBO GO)
Animated teleseries sequel to Toei Doga/GoNNagai's 70s hits GETTER ROBO and GETTER ROBO G [released in feature form on F.H.E. Video as THE STARVENGERS, and episodic form as ROBO-FORMERS in the U.S.—ed.]; where three separate jets (made of a special molecular material) can combine in three different configurations to form one of three super robots. This new, violent throwback to the golden age of Japanese TV animation, features the exploits of the new Getter Team, led by Go Ichimonji, against the maniacal forces of Professor Landou and the Metalbeast Army. The series' music is provided by veteran Michiaki

"Chumei" Watanabe (MAZINGER Z, KIKAIDER, GETTER ROBO), with the theme song vocalized by Ichiro Mitsuki (BAROM ONE, MAZINGER Z, INAZUMAN FLASH, COMBATTLER V). Produced by Dynamic Productions, Big West and Toei Doga. Broadcast from 2/11/91 on TV Tokyo.

•**KUNOICHI SOLDIERS—THE NINJA WARRIORS** (ZA NINJA UORIAHZU—KUNOICHI SENSHI)
Shochiku Home Video. 80 min. SHV Cinema made-for-video movie. A rip in the time/space continuum sends three female ninjas from the Edo Era to 1990s Tokyo. The campy action film features veteran actor and "Great Spirit World" new-age guru Tetsuro Tamba, and wrestlers from the SWS federation—the Great Kabuki and General K.Y. Wakamatsu. 3/21/91.

•**NUDE MASK** (KEKKO KAMEN)
Japan Home Video. 60 min. made-for-video film, written and directed by Go Nagai, based on his original manga series. Starring Chris Aoki, Playmate Japan 1990. Nagai's feminine parody of GEKKO KAMEN (MOONLIGHT MASK), features a superheroine, whose face is covered by a crimson mask, and the rest of her body by a matching scarf, who battles the perverse forces of evil (namely samurai throwbacks). 3/22/91.

•**WORLD APARTMENT HORROR** (WARUDO APATOMENTO HORA)
Embodiment Films. Written and directed by Katsuhiro Otomo. Starring Hiroki Tanaka, Yuji Nakamura, Kimiko Nakagawa. The author/artist/director of AKIRA creates a powerful, live-action black comedy. A "chinpira" (street punk) for the Yakuza is assigned to evict the Asian tenants from their apartment building, then something strange happens—demons that also inhabit the building appear, and the chinpira must band together with the "lowly" Asians to fend off their attack. 4/91.

•**HYPERSAPIEN HUNTING** (CHOKOSO HANTEINGU)
Shochiku Release. Produced by Tsuburaya Film Co., Ltd. and Sega Enterprises. Supervisor/Producer: Akio Jissoji. Executive Producers: Noburo and Akira Tsuburaya. Photography: Shinichi Ohoka. Special Makeup Effects: Tomoo Haraguchi (Funhouse). Director: Mitsunori Hattori. Starring Tei Okamori, Kazumi Nishimori, Rei Takagi. Near future, bloody SF film concerning the struggle between psycho-kenetic hypersapiens (created via cloning, but with altered gene-splicing), the corporation responsible for spawning them and a fascist police state. On a double-bill with:

•**LAST FRANKENSTEIN** (LASUTO FURANKENSHUTAIN)
Shochiku Release. Directed by Takeshi Kawamura. Starring Akira Emoto, Yoshio Harada, Juro Kara. Horror film that attempts to present metaphysical meanings in society, centering on a mad, eye-patched scientist (!), his creation, and it's bride. This is Kawamura's first film as a director, after spending the last four years as a member of the #3 Erotica theatrical ensemble. 4/20/91.

•**DRUGLESS** (DORAGULESU)
Japan Home Video. 67 min. made-for-video film from the brother team of writer Chisho Konaka and director Shojo Konaka. A reporter looks into a series of mysterious deaths caused by a deadly new hallucinogenic drug—and the horrible side effects entailed in its use. 4/26/91.

•**HIRUKO—DEMON HUNTER** (YOKAI HANTA—HIRUKO)
Shochiku-Fuji. Original Story: Daijiro Moroboshi. Special Effects Supervisor: Eiichi Asada. Written and Directed by Shinya Tsukamoto. Starring Keiji Sawada, Masataka Kudo, Megumi Ueno. Daijiro Moroboshi is a popular manga writer/artist, who is well-known for creating unique worlds, based on myths and pagan beliefs. He teams up for this horror/occult movie with new director Shinya Tsukamoto, the autuer behind the incredible underground film TETSUO [see *ShortTakes* section—ed.]. The story concerns an archaeologist who is witness to bizarre phenomena stemming from his probing at an ancient burial sight. 5/11/91.

•**FROM DRACULA WITH LOVE** (KAMITSUKITAI/DORAKIYURA YORI AI-O)
Toho Production. Director: Shunsuke Kaneko. Starring Ken Ogata, Narumi Yasuda, Hikaru Ishida, Takero Morimoto. A comedy about a Japanese family man, who, after an auto accident, is accidentally given a transfusion of Dracula's blood. Of course, he rises from the grave to upset his family. 6/1/91.

•**TARO!: MOMOTARO IN TROUBLE**
New Century Producers. Director: Teruyoshi Iishi. Starring Yoichi Miura, Hideki Fujiwara, Kazumi Moriyama. Contemporary juvenile fantasy about a boy descendant of the legendary "Momotaro"—the man born of the peach, who single-handedly battled demons. Taro and his rock n' roll friends encounter a religious cult and it's demon-leader. On a double-bill with:

•**THE HAPPY END STORY** (HAPPI-ENDO NO MONOGATARI)
New Century Producers. Director: Hiroaki Tochihara. Starring Ken Osawa, Yoshie Morimoto, Kyusaku Shimada. A time-warp fantasy set during an autumn festival at a Japanese high school, with more than enough twists and thrills. 6/1/91.

•**YUMEJI**
Arato Genjiro Pictures. Director: Seijun Suzuki. Starring: Kenji Sawada, Tomoko Mariyama, Tamasaburo Bando. A fantasy piece concerning the Taisho Era illustrator Yumeji Takehisa's brief stay at Kanazawa. 6/91.

The Eastern Front

•Zipang-Man Shoots Fantasy Seg for FIGARO STORY
Kaizo Hayashi, director of the Toho fantasy ZIPANG (see review elsewhere in this issue), recently completed a segement for the international film FIGARO STORY. The segment, "The Man in the Moon" (Tsugi no Hito), is the third in a triology (segs 1 and 2 were handled in New York and Paris, and directed by locals). It is a fantastic love story between a human and off-worlder, with many special effects and optical photography. The film made a tour of Japan during June.

LASERDISCS SIGHTED OVER TOKYO

•THE SPACE GIANTS (MAGUMA TAISHI aka CAPTIAN MAGMA)
It's the 25th Anniversary of Japan's original spfx color teleseries, featuring the exploits of Goldar and the Mura family in their battle against the evil Rodak. Humming Bird Video is releasing the series which both Bandai and Toei Video have tried to release in the past (Bandai still has a "Best of CAPTIAN MAGMA" disc in circulation). All of the episodes in this release, are new prints struck off the original negatives. Each 88 min. disc will contain one complete story in itself (the original 52 episode series was told in 13 4-part chapters—hence, 13 volumes will be released). Vol. 1 "Chapter—Monster Mogunesu", HBLT-60126. Vol. 2 "Chapter—Monster Badora", HBLT-60127. With more volumes to follow—all discs are ¥6,000 ea. Humming Bird Video.

•The GIANT MONSTER GAMERA Encyclopedia (DAI-KAIJU GAMERA Zenshu)
Daiei Video, following up on the heels of the DAIMAJIN Encyclopedia laserdisc box-set, has gone all-out for its tribute to their Gamera Series. The set will contain all of the atomic turtle's titles: 1 GIANT MONSTER GAMERA (GAMERA aka GAMMERA THE INVINCIBLE), GIANT MONSTER DUEL—GAMERA VS. BARUGON (WAR OF THE MONSTERS aka GAMERA VS. BARUGON), GIANT MONSTER DOG-FIGHT—GAMERA VS. GYAOS (RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS aka GAMERA VS. GYAOS), GAMERA VS. SPACE MONSTER VIRAS (DESTROY ALL PLANETS), GAMERA VS. GIANT MAD-BEAST GUILLON (ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS aka GAMERA VS. GUIRON), GAMERA VS. GIANT DEVIL-BEAST JIGER (GAMERA VS. MONSTER X), GAMERA VS. DEEP-SEA MONSTER ZIGRA (GAMERA VS. ZIGRA), and SPACE MONSTER GAMERA (SUPER MONSTER). The set will also feature all of the theatrical trailers, stills, behind-the-scenes photos, original designs—including the rejected or NG designs for the mutant turtle's enemies. All of the films have been mastered for letterboxing—all but SPACE MONSTER GAMERA (in Vistavision) were shot in Daieiscope. Release date set for late August. Estimated price ¥40,000. Daiei Video.

•ULTRAMAN—TOWARDS THE FUTURE/ULTRAMAN GREAT
The newest Ultra Series (reviewed last issue) is now available from Bandai/Emotion Video. What's that you say? "They're in Japanese anyway..."? Well, the disks are in English—without the intrusion of subtitles. Side A features two episodes in the original soundtrack, while Side B contains the same two episodes in Japanese. Divided into two "chapters", *The Goudes* and *Duel of the Monsters*, the discs are as follows: Vol. One (#1 & #2), Vol. Two (#3 & #4) and Vol. Three (#5 & #6). The *Duel of the Monsters* is made up of #8 & #9 (Vol. One), #10 & #11 (Vol. Two) and #12 & #13. (Vol. Three) and #7 and Behind-the-Scenes "The Making of ULTRAMAN—TOWARDS THE FUTURE" (Vol. Four), will be released October, 1991. Each disc is retailing in Japan at ¥5,800.

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BAROM ONE photo ©: 1972 Toei Co., Ltd.

GODZILLA vs. K

Hashimoto quits, Tsuchiya and Sahara join the cast

GUY TUCKER

Koji Hashimoto, key to the early planning of the film is no longer involved in the project—Hashimoto chose to leave (declining details), after the second draft of the script was delivered. Tomoyuki Tanaka is once again joined by his BIOLLANTE partner, Shogo Tomiyama; associate producer is Tomiya Ban. "With GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE, we failed to make a story which could be fully enjoyed by children, it was too adult. So with this new film, we will make it more engaging for children."

Kawakita, keeping the lid on the plot devices told us in November of 1990 that King Ghidorah would not change from the original design. Trying to quell rumors about a Mecha Ghidorah... it worked. Now, Toho has let the cat out of the bag—in the last 1/3 of the film—Godzilla will battle a Mecha Ghidorah! Also, there *is* a third monster/dinosaur in the film—Godzilla himself, in his pre-mutated dinosaur form—the Gojirasaurus!

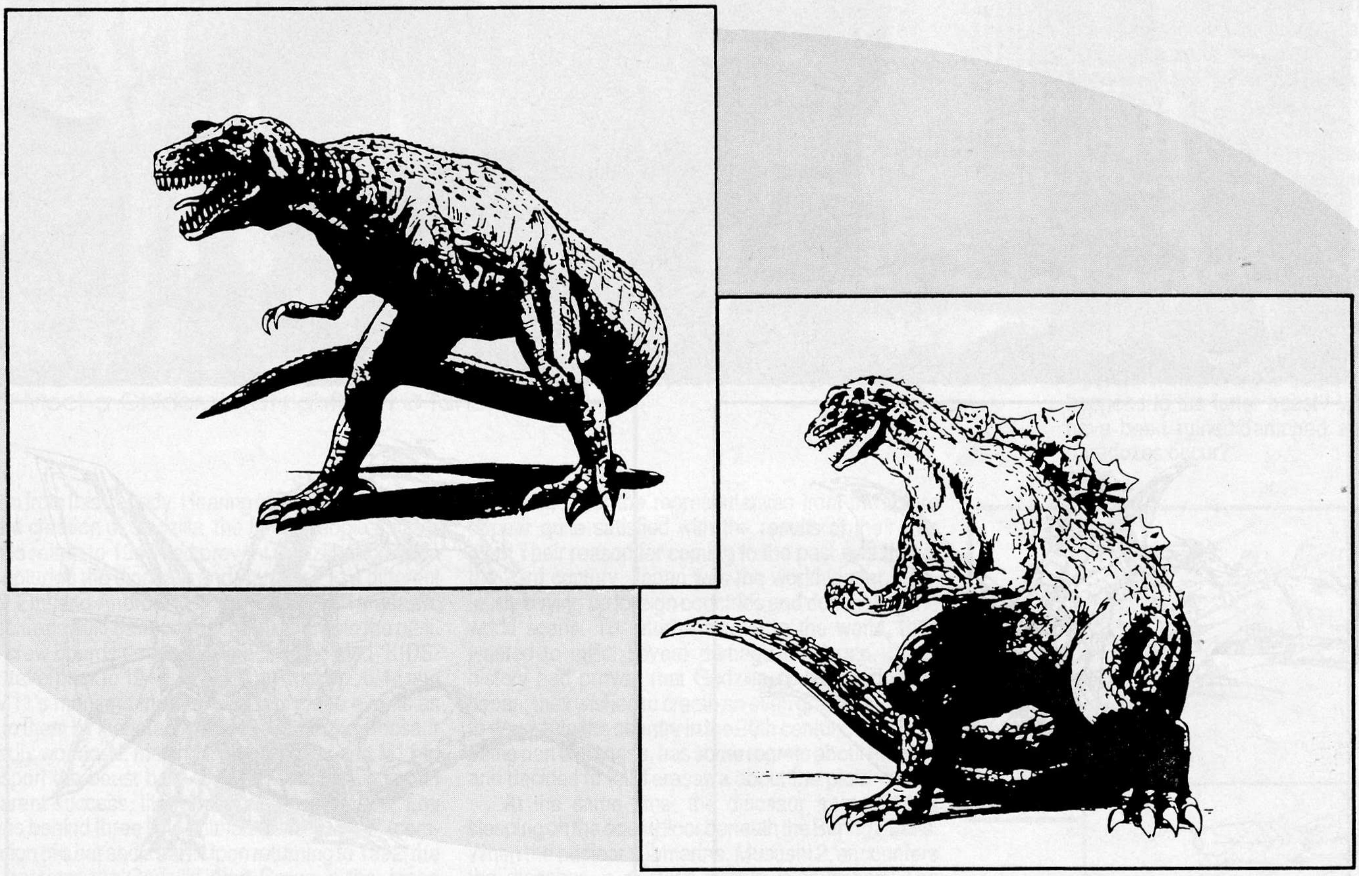
As reported last issue, composer Akira Ifukube has agreed to score the eighteenth Godzilla film. It is his first since 1975, and his only film score since OGIN-SAMA (LOVE AND FAITH, 1978). In a telephone interview on March 20, 1991, Mr. Ifukube confirmed reports that he had signed the contract with Toho on March 18.

Although Maestro Ifukube has long been regarded intransigent on the subject of scoring another Godzilla film, the composer in reality declined the GODZILLA 1984 assignment due to health reasons; and according to Toho insiders, director Kazuki Omori never considered him for GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE. Due no doubt to his massive success with the DRAGON QUEST albums, Koichi (THE NEW CYBORG 009) Sugiyama was signed instead; but Omori, an inveterate John Williams fan, had Sugiyama produce Williamsish themes, even as his bosses decided to add tracks from Ifukube's OSTINATO album.

To Japanese fans, Godzilla and Ifukube are interchangeable, and though Ifukube as recently as the

KING GHIDORAH

for Godzilla's 18th Entry.



Godzilla meets the assassin from the future—Mecha-Ghidorah! (opposite); Toho's comparison sketches of a Tyrannosaurus and the new "Gojirasaurus' appearing in the new film (above). All photos/art © Toho Co., Ltd.

summer of 1990 declared he felt his style not to be in keeping with a "modern Godzilla," he declared himself more than willing to go ahead with the next one. Though the film's planners, including spfx director Koichi Kawakita, expected Ifukube to write a brand-new Godzilla March for the picture, Mr. Ifukube at the time laughed "I have no idea what I'm going to do yet!"

Speaking to the Maestro on April 4, he related to us that he was busy studying electronics for new musical sounds for the score; on July 8, Mr. Ifukube reported that he had written at least 20 minutes of the score's 60, directly from the script—and from lengthy discussions with Directors Kazuki Omori and Koichi Kawakita. Although somewhat disappointed by the script, seeing the rushes from the Godzilla vs. Mecha-Ghidorah scenes in Shinjuku, Ifukube replied they were "spectacular."

Akira Ifukube completed the score in August and recorded in early September.

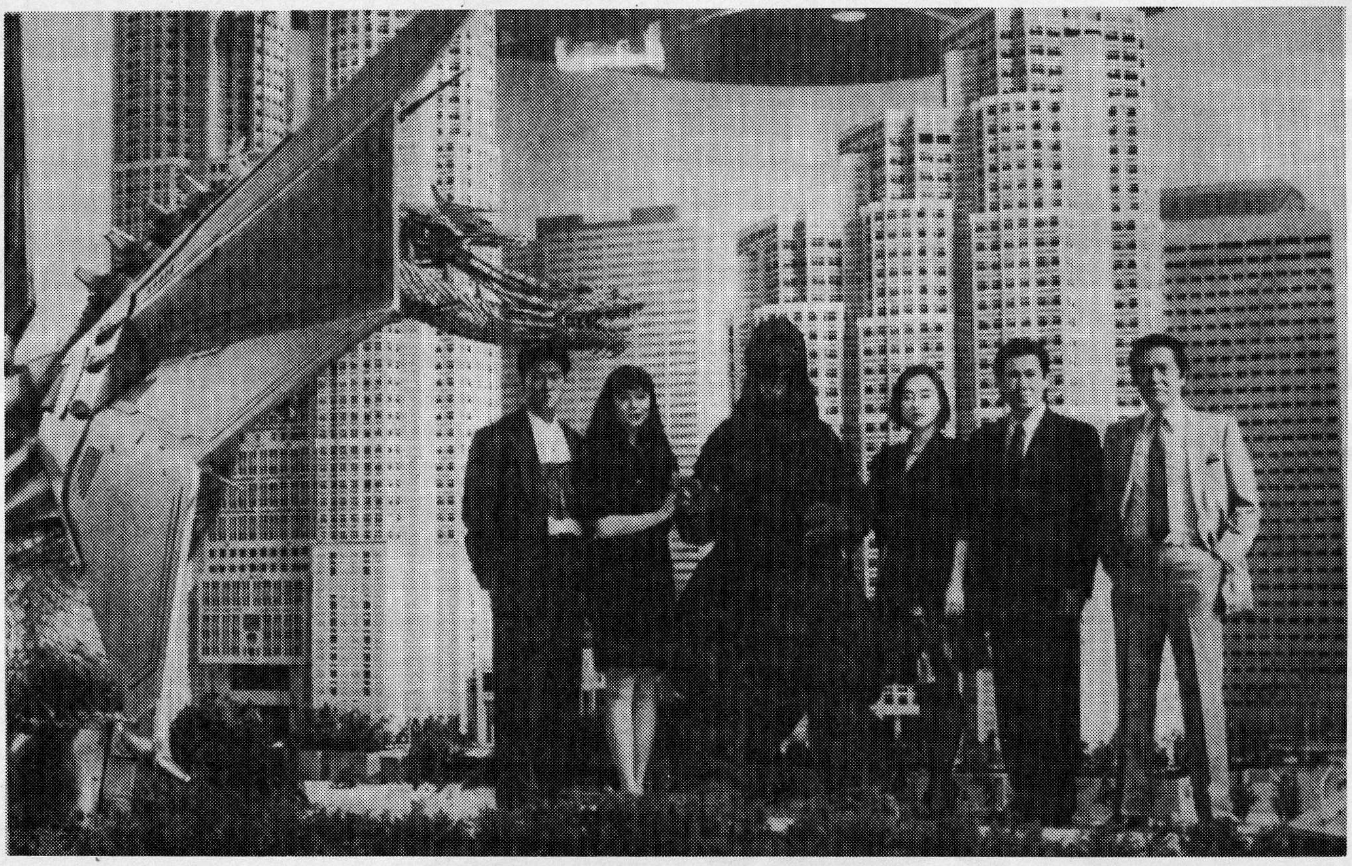
Director Kazuki Omori is consciously trying fit within the frame work of the original series by securing some of the original Toho stars to fill out the main cast:

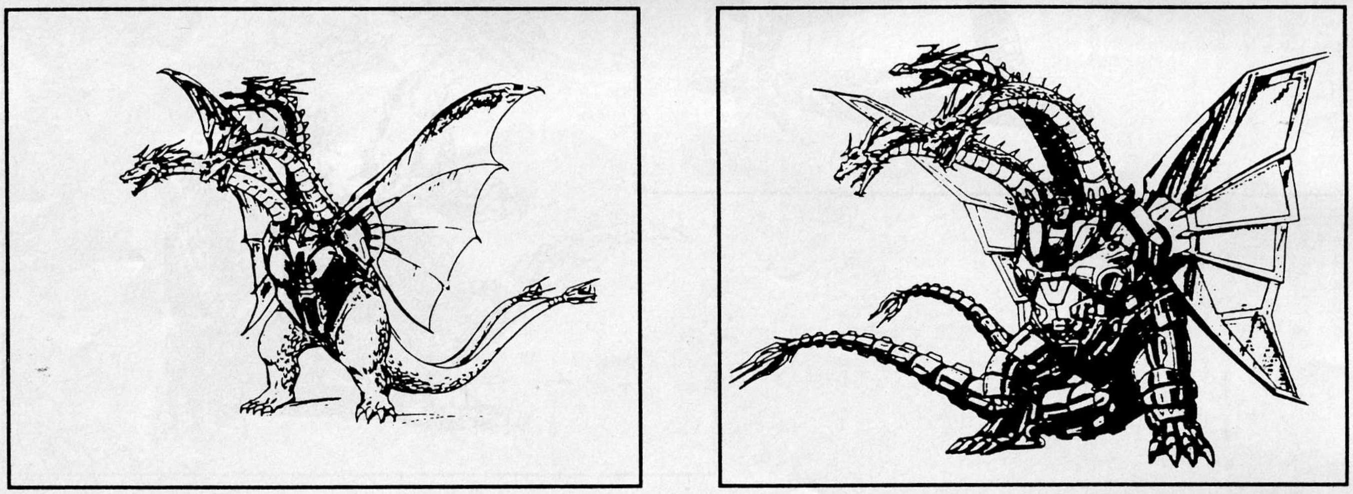
Yoshio Tsuchiya, well-known for his roles in THE HUMAN VAPOR, MATANGO, FRANKENSTEIN CONQURES THE WORLD, YOG and others, was cast as Haruaki Shindo one of the principle characters of the film. Tsuchiya shot his scenes in two weeks, and said this about his role, "I play a character who is intent on saving Godzilla." And went onto hint that his character is far from a good guy. Tsuchiya has said that "There's so little good SF produced these days, that I can't do as much as I'd like to..." Tsuchiya has had offers, (including the part of Professor Hayashida in GODZILLA 1984) but feels that even though their is a lot of live-action spfx works on television, neither the programs or the characters themselves tend to interest him.

Joining the cast at the last minute, is veteran Kenji Sahara. Sahara, who was played everything from heroes to villains in Honda's films, also has a main role in the film. Reportedly not wanting to act in any monster films without Honda at the helm, Sahara perhaps was pursuaded by the inclusion of old pal Tsuchiya to the roaster. Evasive about his character, Sahara could only say that his character may oppose Tsuchiya's, and gleefully described him as "a *bad guy.*" Unfortunately, Tsuchiya and Sahara have no scenes together.

Shoji Kobayashi, the character actor who has played Captain Muramatsu in ULTRAMAN and Tobei Tachibana in the Kamen Rider series, plays Yuzo Tsuchiashi. Megumi Odaka is back, reprising

(Continued on page 14)





Ghidrah and Godzilla pose against the Tax Towers on the miniature set with the cast member—Yoshio Tsuchiya on the far right; Unused production sketches used in the development of the Mecha-Ghidorah (above). Photos/art © Toho Co., Ltd.

her role as psychic girl Miki Saegusa from GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE. This is Saegusa's third genre role, which includes PRINCESS FROM THE MOON. Rounding out the cast are new faces to the genre.

In preparing the film, Omori stated "In writing this story, I wanted to create a screenplay that dealt with Japan and its place in the world community. Japan is not well liked today, and may be hated in the future!"

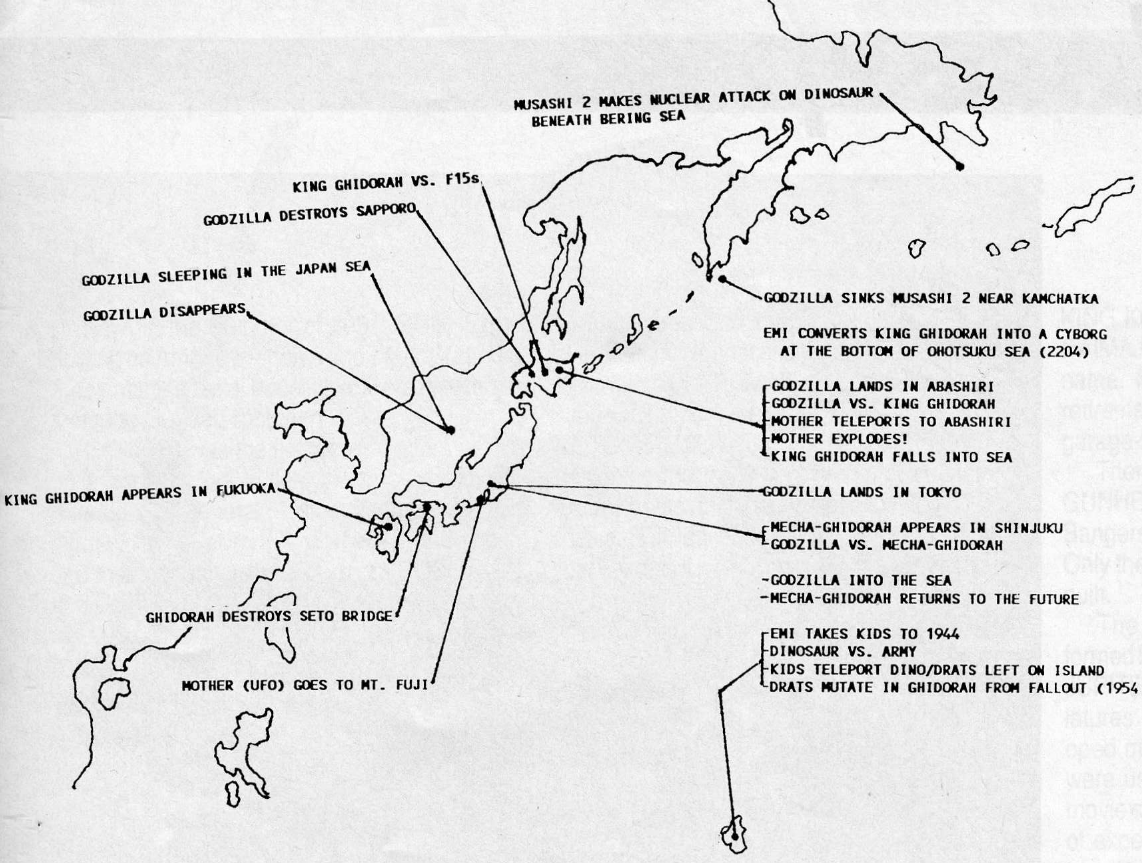
According to Toho press releases, special effects began shooting on May 9 and live action on June 20—the film wraps on September 15. GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH will be released on December 14, 1991.

THE STORY: ED GODZISZEWSKI

One thousand days have passed since the battle between Godzilla and Biollante. In 1992, a large UFO appears above Tokyo. The Self Defense Forces, the Cabinet and Safety Ministry research the UFO with the aid of Miki Saegusa (Megumi Odaka). Meanwhile, a non-fiction writer named Kenichiro Terasawa (Isao Toyohara) and his editor, Chiaki Morimura (Kiwako Harada) become interested in a story about Masukichi Ikehata. This man claims to have seen a dinosaur during World War II while stationed on Lagos Island (in the Marshall chain). When his unit was threatened by American forces, a Tyrannosaurus-like dinosaur appeared and killed the American troops, allowing him to survive. After interviewing him, Terasawa and Morimura tell this story to Professor Masaki, a paleontologist. The professor admits the possibility that a dinosaur could have existed in the Marshall Islands during 1940s. Upon hearing this, Terasawa formulates a theory about this dinosaur—since the U.S. conducted atomic tests in the Bikini Atoll in the 1950s, the fallout from these tests could have caused the dinosaur to mutate into Godzilla!

Several days later, Terasawa goes to interview Shindo (Yoshio Tsuchiya), president of the Tero Group Corporation, who was the battalion leader on Lagos Island during the war. Shindo, who is a dinosaur researcher, becomes interested in Terasawa's theory and produces a photograph of his unit and the dinosaur in 1944.

The UFO finally contacts the government of Japan. Three people appear from the UFO—Grenchiko (Richard Berger), Wilson (Chuck Wilson) and Emi Kano (Anna Nakagawa), all representatives from the year 2204. They meet with Prime Minister Hayashida, and tell how Godzilla had destroyed a nuclear power plant in the 21st century. The resulting fallout wiped out all life in Japan, and the country remained that way through the 23rd century. They have returned to the past to correct history and save


MUSASHI 2 MAKES NUCLEAR ATTACK ON DINOSAUR BENEATH BERING SEA
KING GHIDORAH VS. F15s
GODZILLA DESTROYS SAPPORO
GODZILLA SLEEPING IN THE JAPAN SEA
GODZILLA DISAPPEARS
GODZILLA SINKS MUSASHI 2 NEAR KAMCHATKA
EMI CONVERTS KING GHIDORAH INTO A CYBORG AT THE BOTTOM OF OHOTSUKU SEA (2204)
GODZILLA LANDS IN ABASHIRI
GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH
MOTHER TELEPORTS TO ABASHIRI
MOTHER EXPLODES!
KING GHIDORAH FALLS INTO SEA
KING GHIDORAH APPEARS IN FUKUOKA
GODZILLA LANDS IN TOKYO
MECHA-GHIDORAH APPEARS IN SHINJUKU
GODZILLA VS. MECHA-GHIDORAH
-GODZILLA INTO THE SEA
-MECHA-GHIDORAH RETURNS TO THE FUTURE
EMI TAKES KIDS TO 1944
DINOSAUR VS. ARMY
KIDS TELEPORT DINO/DRATS LEFT ON ISLAND
DRATS MUTATE IN GHIDORAH FROM FALLOUT (1954
GHIDORAH DESTROYS SETO BRIDGE
MOTHER (UFO) GOES TO MT. FUJI

The GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH map of events (above); rejected designs for the middle head of Mecha-Ghidorah (at right). Art © Toho Co., Ltd.

OTHER PLOT ELEMENTS:

- Godzilla destroys the Musashi 2 off the coast of Russia and heads for northern Japan. Landing at Sapporo, Godzilla destroys the city.

- Godzilla battles King Ghidorah in Hokkaido and during the struggle, Godzilla kills the middle head of Ghidorah. Defeated, the enemy monster plummets into the Ohotsuku Sea.

- After Godzilla destroys the main time machine with Wilson and Grenchiko aboard, Emi and M11 return to the future.

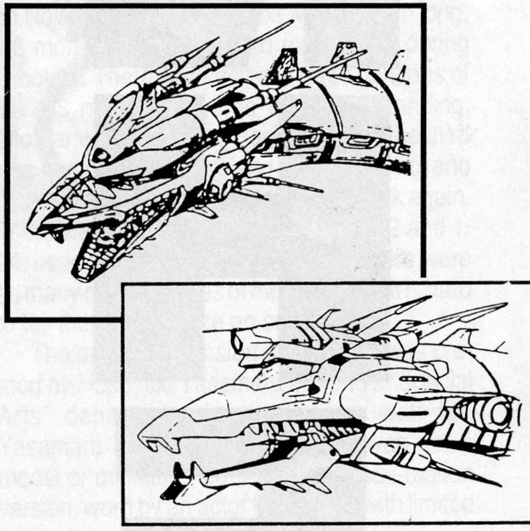
- In 2204, King Ghidorah is found beneath the sea and is converted into a cyborg. A mechanized head with a control cockpit (piloted by M11) replaces the head which was destroyed by Godzilla. The new head is equipped with a laser beam. Mechanical wings are attached to body armor, and the body armor opens up to allow Mecha-Ghidorah to attack with tentacle-like cables.

- As Godzilla lands in Tokyo, Mecha-Ghidorah appears to wage battle amidst the newly built skyscrapers of Shinjuku.

- There are several plot points concerning the capture of the Gojirasaurus in 1944; since this is the monster which ravaged Tokyo and was disintegrated by the Oxygen Destroyer in 1954, and the Godzilla that appears in 1984 is a different creature of the same species—what happens to the latter beast? What time lines have been ruined/damaged and what other paradoxes occur?

Japan from this tragedy. Hearing of Terasawa's theory on the creation of Godzilla, the future people make a plan to return to 1944 and prevent Godzilla's creation by capturing the dinosaur and warping it to a different time. Emi and Android M11 are joined by Terasawa, Masaki and Miki Saegusa on the mission into the past. The crew boards small warp machines called "KIDS" and travel back to 1944. The KID arrives on 2/6/44 and on M11's monitors the crew witnesses the events as told to them by Ikehata. During the battle, the dinosaur is badly wounded, making it easy for Emi and M11 to transport the beast back to 1992. The mission is an apparent success, though before leaving 1944, Emi leaves behind three little animals called "Drats" (combination of a cat and a bat). Upon returning to 1992, the KID contacts the Godzilla Alert Group in the Japan Sea. The report comes in that Godzilla has disappeared completely, seemingly erased from the Earth. But...at the same time, King Ghidorah appears above the Pacific Ocean and destroys Fukuoka. Everyone is astonished, but the representatives from the future appear quite satisfied with the results of their true plan! Their reason for coming to the past was that in the 23rd century, Japan was the world leader, ruthlessly buying up foreign countries and dominating the world scene. To return balance to the world, they wanted to inflict severe damage on Japan. Since history had proven that Godzilla could not destroy Japan, they wished to create an even greater monster to devastate the country in the 20th century. But, Emi, being part Japanese, has some regrets about the plan and decides to tell Terasawa about the plot.

At the same time, the dinosaur from 1944 is sleeping on the ocean floor beneath the Bering Straits. When the nuclear submarine, Musashi 2, encounters the dinosaur, a nuclear missile is launched. The radioactive barrage on the dinosaur causes it to mutate. Godzilla is born again in 1992! The stage is set for the battle of the ages: GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH!



Executive Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka. Screenplay/Director: Kazuki Omori. Producer: Shojo Tomiyama. Associate Producer: Tomiya Ban. Photography: Yoshinoru Sakiguchi. Art Direction: Ken Sakai. Sound Recording: Katsuo Miyauchi. Lighting: Tsuyoshi Awakihara. Editor: Michiko Ikeda. Music: Akira Ifukube

SPECIAL EFFECTS

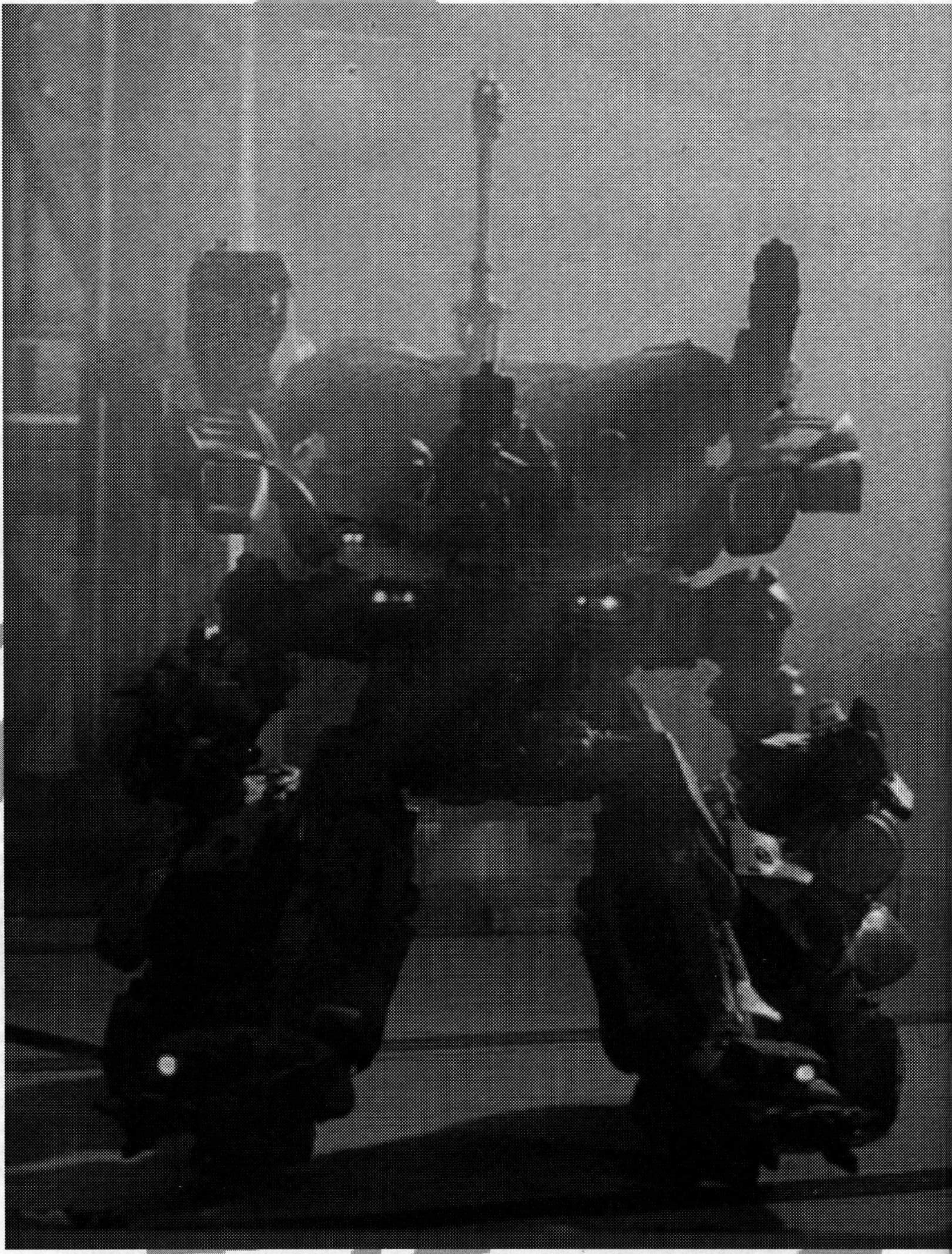
Director: Koichi Kawakita. Photography: Kenichi Eguchi & Toshimitsu Oneda. Art Director: Tetsuzo Osawa. Lighting: Kaoru Saito. Pyrotechniques: Tadashi Watanabe. Wire Works: Koji Matsumoto. Sculpting: Tomoki Kobayashi. Assistant Director: Kenji Suzuki

CAST

Emi Kano: Anna Nakagawa. Miki Saegusa: Megumi Odaka. Kenichiro Terasawa: Isao Toyohara. Chiaki Morimura: Kiwako Harada. Takehito Fujio: Tokuma Nishioka. Yuzo Tsuchiashi: Shoji Kobayashi. Haruaki Shindo: Yoshio Tsuchiya. Grenchiko: Richard Berger. Wilson: Chuck Wilson.

A Toho Film/Toho Studios 1991

GUNHED SPFX:



On the 22nd of July, 1989, Toho Company Ltd., the birth place of many great Japanese science fiction films and Sunrise, Ltd., the animation studio responsible for the new wave of Japanese robots, teamed up to release a new live action movie based on the popular giant robot theme, GUNHED (GANHEDO).

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KAWAKITA

BRINGS ROBOTS TO LIFE

BOB JOHNSON

Now, in the Summer of 1991, GUNHED is landing on American shores and *Markalite* takes a look at the special effects that were created to bring the Gunhed robot/tank to life.

GUNHED was the first of what attempted to be a wave of live action, giant robot movies. Although the general movie-going public in this country have yet to see GUNHED, they have had the chance to see and ignore ROBOTJOX and CRASH AND BURN (which went directly to video) from Charles Band and the now-defunct Empire Pictures company. It is the special effects in GUNHED which make it a far superior film to its two American competitors [for a review of GUNHED, see ShortTakes in *Markalite* issue #1—ed.].

The mechanical designs for GUNHED were handled by Shoji Kawamori, a member of Studio Nue. Because the producers wanted a realistic design and not one based on human form, such as MOBILE-SUIT GUNDAM, Kawamori was chosen because of his recognition as a mechanical designer, with a "military sense."

Kawamori's debut as a mechanical designer was in the 1978 TV series FIGHTING GENERAL DAIMOS (seen in the U.S. as a TV movie entitled STARBIRDS) as an assistant to Kazutaka Miyatake. After that, he designed the space battleship "Ultria" from THE ULTRAMAN (1979—Nippon Sunrise), sub-machines for BATTLE WARRIOR GORDIAN (1979—Tatsunoko Pro) and those lighters come robots, GOLDEN WARRIOR GOLDLIGHTAN (1980—Tatsunoko), as well as numerous toy lines.

Kawamori's most popular design so far was the "Valkierie," the main machine of SUPER-DIMENSION FORTRESS MACROSS (1982—Tatsunoko). In its American incarnation, ROBOTECH, these were known as "Veritechs." He also designed all the mecha for CRUSHER JOE (1983).

Miniatures and props for GUNHED were overseen by Hiromichi Izumi, whose past works included SOLAR FANG DOUGRAM (1981—Nippon Sunrise) and ARMORED TROOPER VOTOMS (1982—Nippon Sunrise) as well as designing the models of planes from *Area 88* before it was animated. While looking over the full-scale model of GUNHED, Izumi commented that "I guess if we put this Gunhed on the runway at Yokota Air Base or on a U.S. aircraft carrier stationed at Yokosuka, it would make the Kremlin very upset..."

The full-scale Gunhed, standing at full height, is about 6.12 meters or about 20.4 feet tall! It sounds big, but the proportions of the Gunhed robot were scaled down, compared to the 60 foot height of Nippon Sunrise's animated Gundam robot. This was done to increase the realism of the machine. The 1/1 Gunhed has a framework of iron pipes and copper materials and has a "skin" made of F.R.P., a highly fortified plastic. Though it does have wheels, it cannot move by itself. However, there is a built in motor in the chest area so it can perform some movements such as moving its arms, and turning the head turrett which can be done from a cable connected to an outside power-supply. In addition, there are functioning lights on the chest and nose.

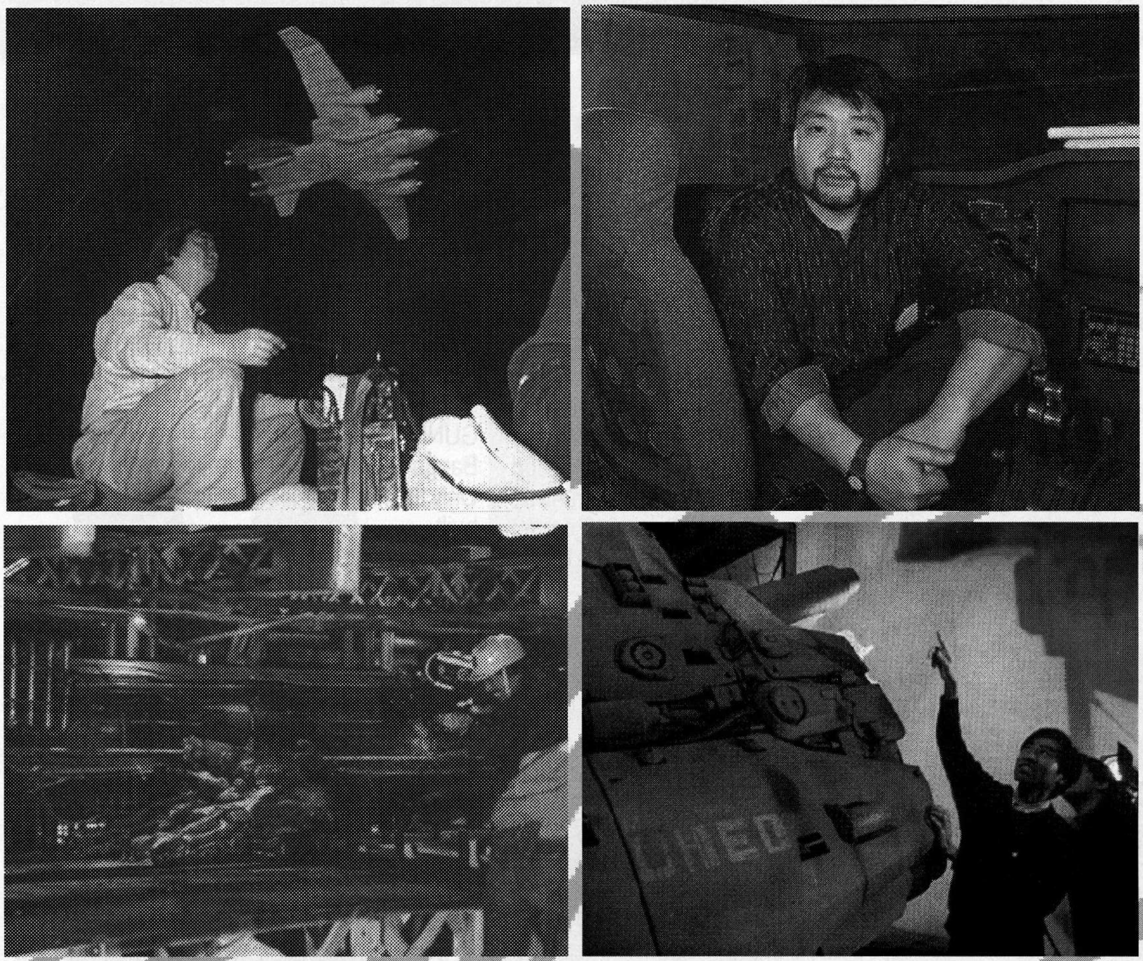
Although the cost of making the full-scale Gunhed was about one million yen, or over $600,000—the huge prop is only seen in a few scenes. You can see it in the beginning when it goes into battle alongside soldiers, when the main character Brooklyn (Masahiro Takashima) gets into the cockpit, when digging out of the robot graveyard and when it is finally destroyed by the Aerobot. It can now be retired to giant prop exhibits or movie warehouses along with the Cybot Godzilla from GODZILLA 1984, the horrendous flea-bitten Kong from Dino DeLaurentis's KING KONG (1976), "Bruce" from JAWS and DAIMAJIN from Daiei's 1966 movie of the same name. Majin, however, enjoys a much better retirement at the head office of Kaiyodo, the garage-kit makers, in Osaka.

There is one more 1/1 scale prop used in GUNHED, and that is the "Mary Ann," the B-Bangers' plane. This is not full-lenghth though. Only the nose of the plane and the cockpit were built.

The Ogawa Modeling Group, originally formed for miniature work on the film SAYONARA JUPITER (Toho—1983), was in charge of miniatures for GUNHED. Ogawa Modeling developed models for SAYONARA JUPITER which were used with Japan's first motion-controlled movie camera. Today, Ogawa has a wide-range of experience in modeling for movies, TV and trial production of toys and models. For GUNHED, they made various sizes of miniatures of both the Mary Ann, as well as Gunhed itself.

The first Gunhed made was a 1/10 scale model which was only used for advertising and at a press conference held at the Teikoku Hotel on November 28, 1988. Next was a 90 cm long, 1/8 model which was used extensively during shooting. There were actually three versions of the 1/8 model. One was the robot standing, another was the robot in tank form and the third was controlled by wires and remote control and could change from tank to robot and back again. There were also smaller Gunheds, 1/12 and 1/24, used for distant shots. Although there were so many different sizes of models used, it is hard to tell them apart once on screen.

The only other version of Gunhed, was created by Noboyuki Yasamaru of Toho's "Special Arts" department [see interview with Mr. Yasamaru in issue #2—ed.]. This was not a model or miniature, but a 1/3 scale suit-mation version, worn by an actor for scenes with limited



Kawakita prepares a wire-shot of the Mary Ann (above left); director Masato Harada (above right); spfx crew shoots the 1/25 Gunhed tank-mode (left); designer Shoji Kawamori examines the detail on the 1/1 Gunhed.

movement.

The Mary Ann was about 60 cm long with a hole underneath for a bar used to hold it up while shooting against a blue screen. More traditional ways were also used to make the Mary Ann fly, such as piano strings. In the scene at the beginning, where the Mary Ann is flying into a sea of clouds, this method was used.

There was only one miniature made of the Aerobot, Gunhed's foe in the final battle. But, since the Aerobot was to appear 16.3 meters tall or three times as tall as Gunhed, the 1/8 scale miniature was 2 meters tall and 1.2 meters wide (about 6' high x 3' wide). It was completely controlled by remote cables and its movements were much more detailed than Gunhed's. The SPFX crew named this model "Kotetsu-Muteki Aerobot" (the Invincible Steel Aerobot) which was written under the control table with a red marker.

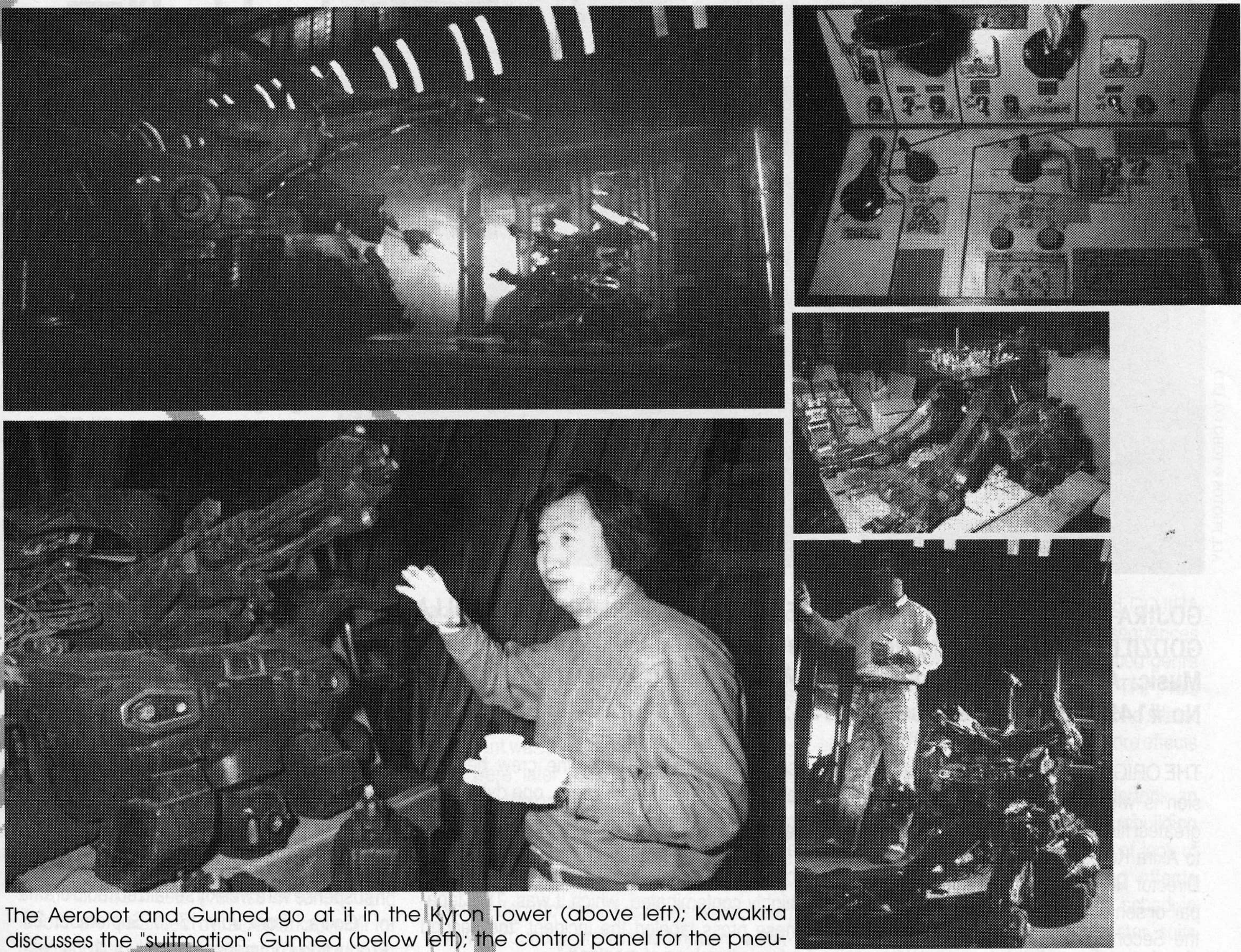
The Aerobot was designed by Masaharu Kawamori and revised by spfx director Koichi Kawakita. The final drawings were done by Studio Ox and finalized by Tetsuzo Ozawa of Toho's Special Art department. The final design resembles a bulldozer, and was very articulated to back up the limited movements of the Gunhed.

The Mother Tower, seen at the beginning of the movie, was originally designed by Masaharu Kawamori and redrawn by artist Yuji Kaida, best known for his interpretations of Japanese monsters and superheroes on everything from magazines, record covers, model boxes, books, etc. Kaida was a planning artist for GUNHED, as well as GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE. The Mother Tower was filmed mostly at full length, but some parts were shot with miniatures. These miniatures were just cut iron boards. This was a similar shooting technique as that used in BLADE RUNNER.

Because of Japanese gun-control laws (known as Jutohou/Law of Guns and Swords), you cannot shoot a movie using real guns unless on location in another country. So, replicas had to be made for the film by Masahisa Suzuki who is the illustrator of *Ariel* (written by Yuichi Sasamoto and published by Asahi Sonorama). Designs for the guns were overseen by Hisayoshi Takuma, an ex-Green Beret and adventure novel writer. Most of the guns were models that were bought and refitted into electrical firing props. The only gun built from scratch was the one custom-designed for Brooklyn.

Bringing all the special effects together into one cohesive film was Toho Special Techniques Expert Koichi Kawakita, who is to many a natural successor to Special Effects Master Eiji Tsuburaya. Kawakita's past directing credits were on the movies SAYONARA JUPITER and ZERO FIGHTER IN FLAMES (ZERO-SEN MOYU—Toho, 1984). [released on video in the U.S. as ZERO—ed.] Before that he assisted spfx directors on films and television series such as HUMAN-COMET ZONE (Toho—1973). Since GUNHED, Kawakita has gone on to handle spfx for GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE and the upcoming GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH. [For more details on Mr. Kawakita, see interview in issue #1—ed.]

Special effects fans can judge the outcome of all this for themselves this summer as GUNHED makes the rounds at movie theaters in the United States!•



The Aerobot and Gunhed go at it in the Kyron Tower (above left); Kawakita discusses the "suitmation" Gunhed (below left); the control panel for the pneumatic Aerobot (top right); the internals of the 1/25 changing Gunhed (middle right); Kawakita sets up the final conflict (bottom right).

GUNHED—The Special Effects Crew

Special Effects Director: Koichi Kawakita. Camera: Kenichi Eguchi. Art Director: Tetsuzo Osawa & Naoyuki Yoshimura. Coordinator: Hiroshi Yamaguchi & Koji Ichihashi. Producer: Yasuo Nishi. Optical Effects: Masanori Nakamura. Special Effects: Noburo Watanabe. Effects Animation: Keita Amamiya. Computer Graphics: Fumio Ooi & Yu Tsuchiya. Matte Painting: Nobuaki Koga. Lighting: Kaoru Saito. Wire Manipulation: Koji Matsumoto. Pyrotechnics: Tadaaki Watanabe. Assistant Director: Kiyotaka Matsumoto. Mechanical Design: Shoji Kawamori & Hiwanori Hanyu. Model Builder: Masaharu Ogawa.

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(including a full lower-half suit), and two 1/25 scale latex monster costumes, meticulously crafted by Toshimitsu and Yagi. Many of the matte paintings used in the production are so convincing, that they still go unnoticed to this day, a true example of master craftsmanship.

The film contains so many memorable visuals, it would be hard to name them all, but no less engraved into the viewer's memory is the monster's roar and thundering footsteps, and the broodingly powerful musical score. Akira Ifukube, the premier composer of his generation along with Fumio Hayasaka, was responsible for both.

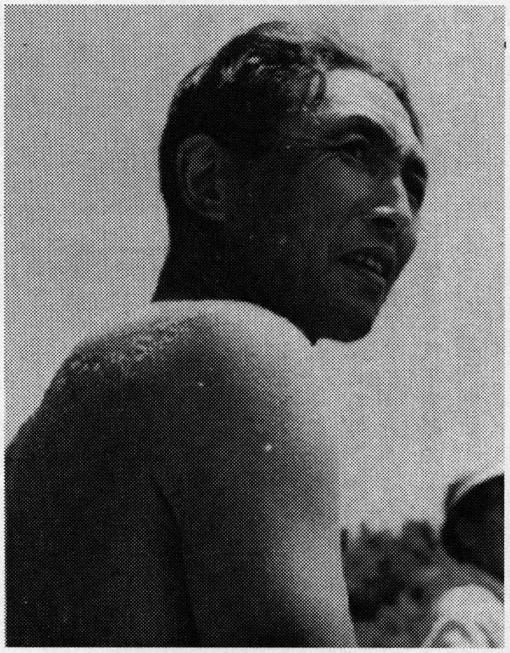
Sound recordist Hisashi Shimonga labored hard over the voice for the beast, but all attempts at re-recording and mixing various animal voices failed. Ifukube, as noted for his research into acoustics as for his music, gave the terror a voice—by rubbing a coarse leather glove across the contrabass string of a piano! Thirty-five years later, Ifukube recalled that in 1954, only one contrabass was available in all Japan, at the Tokyo Music Conservatory, which was not about to lend it out. Never a man fond of halfway measures, Ifukube contrived to smuggle the instrument, so important to not only sound effects but the rumbling, ominous quality of his genre music, out of the conservatory. "And today," Ifukube notes, "contrabasses are all the rage." Godzilla's footsteps were easier, the result of a knotted rope hitting a Japanese taiko drum. Replayed at various speeds, Shimonga mastered the aural apparitions for the monster.

Ifukube had been the first choice to score the film. "My most outstanding memory of Ifukube," Ishiro Honda says today, "is of when he said, 'I can't write music for a movie like this!' And he was right! No one could!" Yet in the end Ifukube did, turning out one of the most impressive of all Japanese film scores in a fraction of the time allowed Hollywood composers. Tsuburaya, however, would not let Ifukube see the effects footage, so the composer wound up composing primarily to the script. Despite the frustrations he faced during composition, GOJIRA stands as Ifukube's personal favorite of his film work.

The film's final cost of over 100 million yen (approximately 1.5 million U.S. dollars, 1954), marked GOJIRA as the most expensive Japanese production until that time, a massive financial gamble just after the completion of the previous record holder, SEVEN SAMURAI. That film had justified its cost by becoming the biggest box-office hit ever shown in Japan. Luckily for Toho, GOJIRA's success would be even greater.

In 1955, the film played in the United States at the Toho LaBrea Theater in Los Angeles. The audience included Alex Gordon and Samuel Z. Arkoff, who thought that the picture would be a sensational debut release for their newly formed American Releasing Corporation (later becoming the famous American International Pictures). They negotiated with Toho's offices and made a bid on the film (retitled by Toho for overseas distribution as GODZILLA—KING OF THE MONSTERS!) for $12,500. In lieu of a reply, they made a second bid.

Many delays and faulty communications later, it was discovered that the film was already in the hands of Edmund Goldman, the head of a film import/export firm, whose lawyer had purchased the property directly from Toho's main offices in Tokyo. Gordon and Arkoff resent this upset even to this day. When asked what ARC/AIP would have done with the film had they gotten it, Arkoff stated recently, "The same. We would have had to either incorporate an American actor into the picture or shoot an entirely new film around the monster footage. The choice was obvious."



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THE LEGEND OF GODZILLA

—Part One

THE HONDA YEARS (1954-1965)

August Ragone with Guy Tucker

GOJIRA—1954 (GODZILLA—KING OF THE MONSTERS! 1956; GODZILLA—THE HYDROGEN-BOMB MONSTER; GODZILLA) Director: Ishiro Honda; Scenario: Takeo Murata and Ishiro Honda, from a story by Shigeru Kayama; Music: Akira Ifukube; Photography: Masao Tamai; Special Effects Supervisor: Eiji Tsuburaya; Film Register No.#1450; Date of Release: 11/3/54; Running Time: 98 minutes; U.S. Running Time: 80 minutes.

THE ORIGINAL JAPANESE LANGUAGE version is widely considered to be the second greatest film ever to be produced in Japan, next to Akira Kurosawa's THE SEVEN SAMURAI. Director Honda was in fact Kurosawa's "sempai" or senior in the director's chair at Toho, but the Second World War saw Honda drafted, while Kurosawa continued directing. After the war, Honda returned to filmmaking through second unit work and assistant direction, actually shooting a large part of Kurosawa's STRAY DOG in 1949. "People tell me that I captured the atmosphere of postwar Japan very well in STRAY DOG, and if so, I owe a great deal of that success to Honda," Kurosawa recalled in *Something Like An Autobiography.* This same collaborative relationship was revived when Honda came out of retirement in 1980, 1984 and 1989: on the films KAGEMUSHA, RAN and DREAMS, Honda accepted the position of "jukantoku," which is usually translated as "chief assistant director" but whose spirit is closer to "co-director." This latter phase in their relationship came about over a casual game of golf in 1979, when Kurosawa first mentioned his "Kagemusha" idea.

Inspiration for GOJIRA came from the infamous incident of the Fukuryu Maru (Fukuryu, ironically, means "Lucky Dragon"). In March of 1954, a fishing boat accidentally strayed into the waters around the Bikini Atoll atomic testing site. Returning to Japan, the crew became afflicted with a strange illness, one dying as a result. A panic swept through the country, and a recall of tuna was ordered because of the correct suspicion that the foodstuff had been highly contaminated, which it was. The Japanese press labeled the incident "the second atomic bombing of mankind."

Toho cancelled the large scale Japan-Indonesia co-production BEHIND THE GLORY (EIKO KAGE-NI), to put their resources to a new project by producer Tomoyuki Tanaka, tentatively titled, THE GIANT MONSTER FROM 20,000 MILES UNDER THE SEA (KAITEI NIMAN MAIRU KARAKITA NO DAI-KAIJU), with BEHIND THE GLORY director, Senkichi Taniguchi (SAMURAI PIRATE), slated to helm the project. Tanaka's general concept of the proposed film, combined the real-life ship disaster with inspiration sparked by the 1953 U.S. film, THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS. The workoing title was a play on both Disney's 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA *and* the Harryhausen film.

As Japanese science fiction writer Shigeru Kayama hammered out rough story outlines and plot structures under the title "G" for "giant" —Taniguchi was replaced by Ishiro Honda, who had completed the big special-effects war picture EAGLE OF THE PACIFIC the year before. Several drafts of the "Kaiju-noir" screenplay were worked on before the final was approved—co-written by scenarist Takeo Murata and director Honda, based on Shigeru Kayama's treatment (which later became a best selling novel). The public was kept in suspense via a weekly serialized radio drama of "Gojira," from July 17 to September 25. Production commenced on July 5, 1954, with already two months of pre-production under its belt, the film wrapped shooting 122 days later.

The subject matter and the human drama are handled in the most refreshingly subtle and serious manner, giving this film the class no other film of its kind, before or after, can ever hope to attain.

At first glance, the characters may seem archetypical 1950s SF film stock—the eccentric paleontologist Dr. Kyohei Yamane (Takashi Shimura), his daughter Emiko (Momoko Kochi), and her love interest Hideto Ogata (Akira Takarada), but the similarities end there, as things are not what they may seem, for two reasons:

1) Ogata is not a carbon-copy formula hero of your more typical productions of the time—he has real depth and dimension that brings him across as an actual human being; and 2) the character of young Dr. Daisuke Serizawa (Akihiko Hirata)—a tortured man, made so from personal inner conflicts and a scientific discovery so horrifying, that it makes

Eiji Tsuburaya (center) directs the monster's attack on Tokyo in GOJIRA; Monster-maker Teizo Toshimitsu (far right) stands by for any mishaps.

the threat of Godzilla seem irrelevant. It is his character and the delicate balance between him, Ogata and Emiko that really makes the film tick, underlined by their excellent performances, especially Hirata's, a part that was almost Takarada's—the actors originally tested for the opposite roles, but Honda, who had directed Hirata in FAREWELL RABAUL (SARABA RABARU), the year before, made the final decision. Honda's switch proved to be a splendid one.

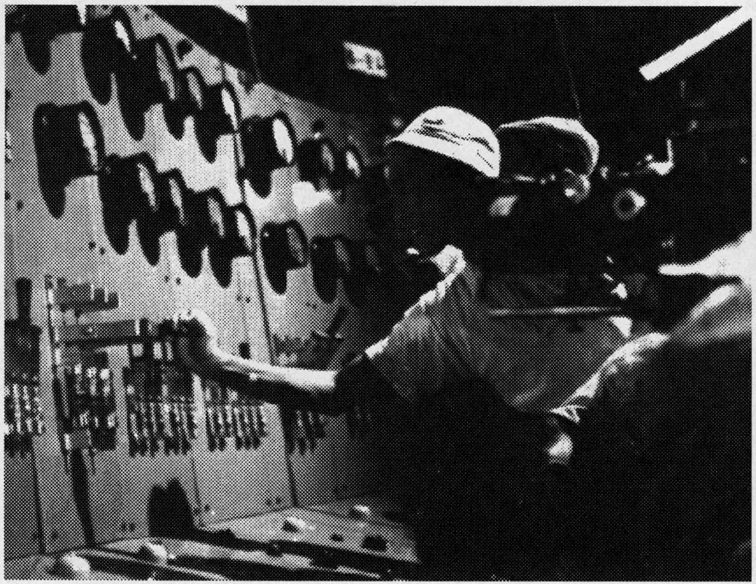
Honda's masterly sense of tension and doom are balanced by a remarkable air of realism. "Above all, I consider my pictures to be documentaries," Honda says, and the unblinking eye of his camera lends the picture a gravity rare in any kind of film of the period, let alone movies showcasing monsters. There is a startling "you-are-there" feeling through much of the film, effected by Honda's taut direction and refusal to cater to conventions of scenario that make so much of 1950s science fiction appear hopelessly campy today. Honda had been determined to recall the plight of the *gembakusha*—survivors of the atomic blasts at Hiroshima and Nagasaki—and, particularly in the post-rampage hospital sequences, Honda communicates a real sense of the tragedy and gravity of the situation. Realism is supplemented—never overcome—by the stylish, superlative photography of Masao Tamai (Mikio Naruse's regular cameraman) and the riveting special effects produced by Eiji Tsuburaya and his staff.

Already in his early 50's before the production began, Tsuburaya, very enthusiastic about the project (monsters having fascinated him since he saw KING KONG in the early 1930s), submitted a rough draft and production designs concerning a monster octopus that attacks Japanese fishing vessels. His treatment was turned down (though elements of it were later used in KING KONG VS. GOJIRA, the opening of WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS, and in an episode of his TV series ULTRA Q, "Fury of the South Seas"), but he was assigned to produce the special photographic effects for Honda's project, which would revolve around a prehistoric creature awakened and mutated by nuclear tests. Tsuburaya signed the best talents available—Iwao Mori, in charge of the film's storyboards; Akira Watanabe, in charge of special effects art direction, monster design and miniature construction; Kuichiro Kishida, miniature lighting; Hiroshi Mukoyama, optical effects; and Teizo Toshimitsu and Kanji Yagi, who produced the pioneering monster suits.

Tsuburaya led his effects team into a production of a scale he had not attempted since the 1942 Toho war propaganda drama, THE WAR AT SEA FROM HAWAII TO MALAYA (HAWAI-MARÉ OKI-KAISEN, Kajiro Yamamoto). Even in 1942, Tsuburaya's art had reached such a level that American Occupation forces reviewed the film and were convinced that the miniature sequences were footage of actual battles. Tsuburaya was nothing if not a dedicated worker, and GOJIRA contained more elaborate effects sequences than any dozen of the U.S.-produced genre films shot during the entire 1950s. The film's sheer realism still tops some of Toho's later fantasy efforts, even those using more effects scenes per minute than GOJIRA.

Tsuburaya and his crew undertook an epic labor of building, striking, and rebuilding elaborate miniature sets because of lack of detail, shooting and re-shooting effects scenes, numerous mishaps and schedule hardships. The men in the monster suits (Haruo Nakajima and Katsumi Tezuka) suffered as diligently as the crew, resulting in a finished product for which Eiji Tsuburaya garnered his first Japanese Film Technique Award. GOJIRA, as much as RASHOMON and GATE OF HELL, would earn the postwar Japanese film industry the respect of those in other nations, and also served to establish Toho's as the premier special effects facility in the world, with the film's excellent utilization and combination of varied special effects techniques—miniature photography and operation, opticals, cel animation, and matte painting, and the many manifestations used to bring Godzilla to life: various mechanical models, hand puppets, separate appendages

> The charcters in GOJIRA may seem archetypical 1950's SF film stock—but the similarities end there…



(opposite left): Honda directs on location at Toba in Mie prefecture; (op r): from left to right—Masao Tamai, Takashi Shimura, Ishiro Honda, Akira Takarada, Momoko Kochi and Akihiko Hirata relax during shooting at Toba; (bottom r) Kochi and Takarada play around with an un-laqured Godzilla suit and leg prop; (top l): Honda throws the switch on Godzilla; (t r): Honda (with hat, pointing) goes over the scene with Takarada (sitting); technicians take a light-meter reading for this important spfx sequence.

Goldman sold the film to Joseph E. Levine of Transworld Pictures. Later, with HERCULES, Levine would invent the marketing tactic of "saturation booking" (and use Ifukube's Godzilla voice for that film's dragon); with GODZILLA, he felt the main problemlay in getting the American audience to identify with foreign characters. They chose to expand the part of Hagiwara (Sachio Sakai), the film's newspaper reporter, who would narrate the entire film as a flashback.

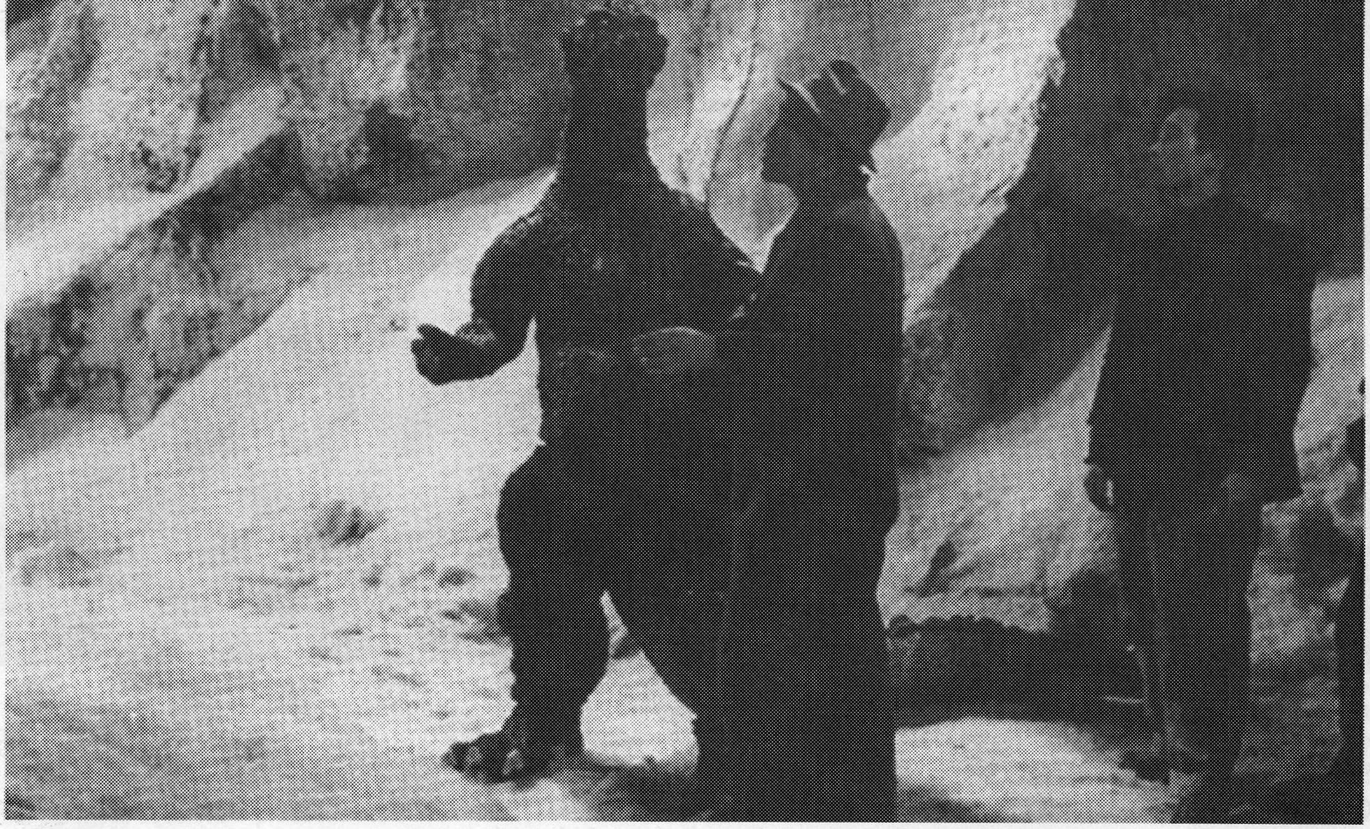
Raymond Burr (evil Thorwald in REAR WINDOW) was picked to essay the foreign correspondent Steve Martin, and reportedly shot all of his scenes, directed by Terry Morse, in a single day. Despite the rush of its production, Burr turned in a worthy performance, as did Frank Iwanaga (THE FROGMEN) playing security officer Tomo Iwanaga.

The flashback narrative of the U.S. version, lends a moody, gritty feel even more documentarian in its way than Honda's, lending the adaptation a life all its own; but the script did for the most part stray away from Honda's subtle socio-political and cultural nuances.

Morse's footage, shot by Guy Roe, is cleverly inserted into the original film, and much attention was paid to Honda's version. This was no "quickie" job—stand-ins were provided for Shimura, Hirata, Kochi, and Takarada, but someone had deadlines to meet. Dubbing only minimal amounts of footage seemed wise, since this was the first attempt at this technique for a foreign film in America. Not only Issei and Nisei, but other non-Japanese Asians (most notably, James Hong filling in as Ogata's voice) were hired to provide voices for English-speaking ears. No credits are available for anyone on the Americanization,but Morse and Roe.

The picture was extensively cut, rendering all the characters but Serizawa more one-dimensional than in Honda's version (the great Takashi Shimura, as Doctor Yamane, has a wonderful moment early into his first speech when he realizes his tie is hanging outside his buttoned jacket). The U.S. prints (distributed by the "Godzilla Releasing Company") were hardly the greatest dupes off the master negative. In other words, American moviegoers were treated to prints Bert I. Gordon would be proud of—a pale shadow of the original vision. Ifukube's opening theme is deleted (all we see is the "strange flash of fire", as the title ques up—with two title cards against black for credits, and the sound of Godzilla intonations), as are the last bars of the ending theme; yet the score overall is left alone and not augmented by American stock music, as has happened with nearly every other Japanese genre film since.

These points aside, the American version is mighty strong stuff, and was pretty intense for 1956 audiences—the greatest of the "Monster-on-the-Loose" spectacles. But the original was possessed of greater allegorical content—a monster film-noir of the highest order that more surely deserves the title, "King of the Monsters."



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GOJIRA RAIDS AGAIN—1955 (GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER—1959; aka GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN; alt. GODZILLA'S COUNTERATTACK; GODZILLA'S REVENGE; GODZILLA STRIKES AGAIN; REVENGE OF GODZILLA; RETURN OF GODZILLA) Director: Moyotoshi Oda; Scenario: Takeo Murata and Shigeaki Hidaka; Music: Masaru Sato; Photography: Seiichi Endo; Special Effects Supervisor: Eiji Tsuburaya; Film Register No.#1696; Release Date: 4/24/55; Running Time: 82 minutes; U.S. Running Time: 78 Minutes.

GODZILLA WAS UTTERLY DESTROYED AT GOJIRA's end by Dr. Serizawa's "Oxygen Destroyer," a chemical substance that removes all oxygen in water, thus disintegrating all living matter. Yet Doctor Yamane could not "think that what we destroyed was the only Godzilla. If man continues to experiment with hydrogen weapons over and again, there may one day appear another Godzilla in the world . . ."

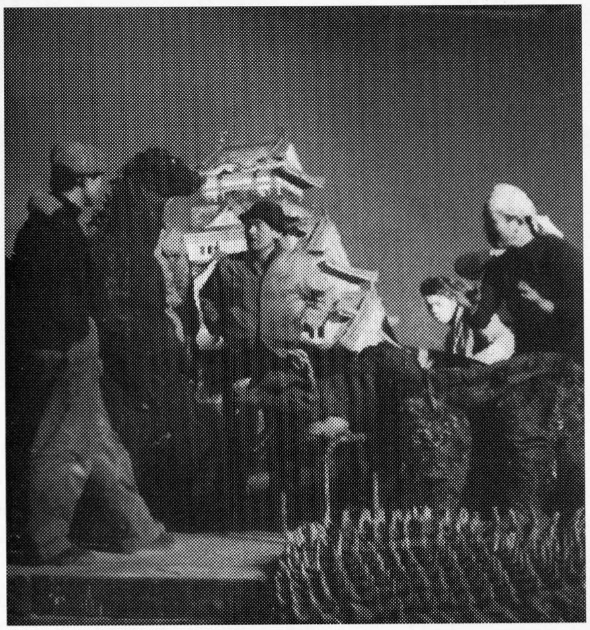
The success of his first vehicle was such that another was compelled to appear within just a few months. In the first unofficial of Toho's "Monster vs. Monster" films, this production explains that the titular beast is a different creature of the same species, not a reincarnation of the original Godzilla. The radioactive monster is pitted against the mean-tempered, spike-laden quadruped Ankylosaurus, or "Angilas."

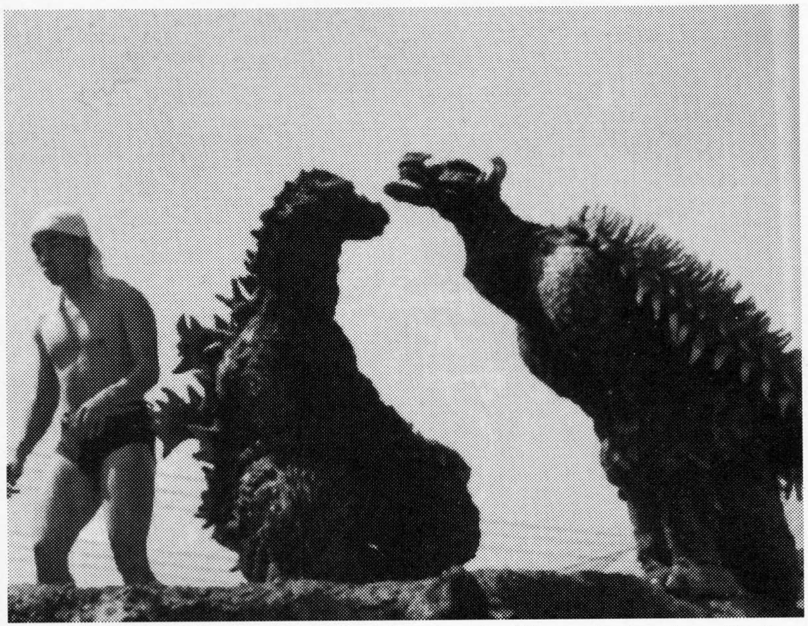
Shigeru Kayama's plot structure is odd for such a format, as the monsters are introduced and battle to the death in the picture's first half. The remainder of the film centers on the military's efforts to dispose of Godzilla, led by airman Tajima (Yoshio Tsuchiya). More than anything, and certainly more than its predecessor, the picture is essentially a melodrama, and a rather awkward and slow one at that.

The picture's main characters Tsukioka (Hiroshi Koizumi) and Kobayashi (Minoru Chiaki) seem unimportant, barely sketched out, and the film's subplots are too mawkish for this type of picture, more resembling the cornier fantasy B-films of the 1950s rather than the major release it portended to be.

Director Oda, with only one previous fantasy film to his credit (Toho's 1954 production of THE INVISIBLE AVENGER, thrown together right after GOJIRA), and with romance and family dramas more his style, fails to do the Murata/Hidaka screenplay justice. Ishiro Honda would have better handled the material, but was either busy on HALF HUMAN at the time, or simply not tapped to direct—according to composer Masaru Sato, who scored a number of Oda's pictures in the 1950s, Toho was curious to see how different combinations of filmmakers would turn out.

The cast is fine, if often painfully misdirected. In a nice touch, Takashi Shimura bridges GOJIRA and its sequel with a cameo as Dr. Yamane. Hiroshi Koizumi played the lead, a role Oda had chosen for Yoshio Tsuchiya. Given his screen debut in by Kurosawa in SEVEN SAMURAI, Tsuchiya was one of Toho's most idiosyncratic actors, actually bucking for the title role in Oda's INVISIBLE AVENGER, quite contrary to the dignified lead-





Tsuburaya directs the monster (Opposite top); Toshimitsu sculpts the head of Angilas (op bott); and checks with the monsters before rolling (top left); A crew member readies the stars for thier fall into the seas (tr).

ing-man image Toho had planned for him (and made him play in INVISIBLE AVENGER). His demotion to Chief Pilot in this sequel might be read as a threat from Toho, but Tsuchiya remained unbowed, and became—through THE HUMAN VAPOR, MATANGO and YOJIMBO, among many others—one of the studio's greatest, most unpredictable (and scarcest) character actors.

Tsuburaya's effects sequences this time around are very good throughout, but inconsistent, with the bulk of the better effects appearing in the latter half of the picture—the crumbling iceburgs are spectacular, but the effects overall aren't on thelevel of GOJIRA, though fairly well executed and shot. Essentially, the same crew of special effects men were on hand for the picture—Akira Watanabe, Kuichiro Kishida, and Hiroshi Mukoyama.

"I can not think that what we destroyed was the only Godzilla. If man continues to experiment with hydrogen weapons over and again, there may one day appear another Godzilla in the world..."

Miniatures are exceptionally well done, especially at the film's climax, featuring the showdown between military jet fighters and Godzilla, which is probably the outstanding effects sequence of the film, which decidedly exceed the "Jets vs. Godzilla" scenes in GOJIRA—excellent pyrotechnical work.

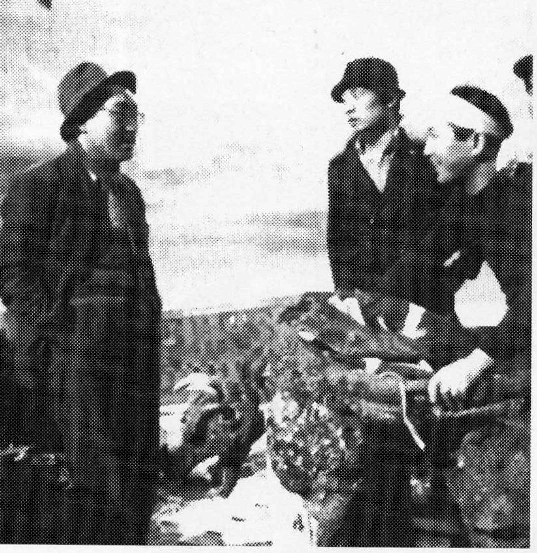
The monsters are a different matter. Both of the suits representing Godzilla and Angilas (crafted by Teizo Toshimitsu and Kanji Yagi) are well done—considering the time limitations, but are not up to the standards presented in the previous film. Godzilla, although closely resembling the original, is a bit on the slender side, while Angilas' manifestation looks amply venomous; but the monsters' hand puppet counterparts do not even match the likeness of the suits, and fail miserably.

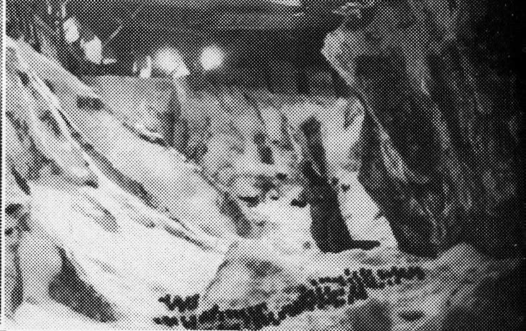
The majority of the monster-battle scenes were accidentally photographed at standard (24 fps—frames per second) or slow speed (18 fps)—thus creating footage of two warring beasts madly rushing at each other. Tsuburaya rather liked the way the footage felt; fancying these scenes, he called the misfortune a stroke of luck.It seemed to him that the beasts were engaged in mortal combat, raw and savage. The scenes were not reshot, as Tsuburaya, already widely regarded at Toho as a tyrant, could have ordered.

This film heralds the appearance of the first of Toho's fictional pieces of military weaponry or "Toho Mecha": the "Ponpon Cannon" or Katusha Tank. This is also the first film in the series where the monsters' eyes move.

Masaru Sato's score is only vaguely memorable—the opening credits (flying through a bank of clouds)—are marked by a tribute to Max Steiner's KING KONG score), and Godzilla's arrival in Osaka Bay. The rest of the score is atmospheric, using low brass and cello, but is too low-key to be as overwhelming as Ifukube's; and almost all of it was cut for the U.S. version in favor of themes from KRONOS and THE DEERSLAYER. After scoring the film, Sato worked for the first time with Kurosawa on RECORD OF A LIVING BEING, gaining through the experience a new burst of confidence and insight which he feels is evident in comparing his work on Oda's film to his last score in 1955, Honda's HALF HUMAN.

Warner Brothers in Hollywood snapped up the property from Edmund Goldman (who optioned the rights from Toho), as soon as they found out there was a sequel to the stateside hit GODZILLA—KING OF THE MONSTERS! in 1956, but, GOJIRA RAIDS AGAIN sat around in various stages of development at the studio for three years before it was ready for release. The film went through two known title changes, "Godzilla Raids Again" and "Godzilla's Revenge," before Warner Brothers was either brought to a halt by Joseph E. Levine (who owned the U.S. rights to the first film) or concluded on its own that the studio did not hold the rights to use the name "Godzilla" (although the name is Toho's copyright and no one else's).





Tsuburaya talks with Katsumi Tesuka as he climbs into the Angilas suit (above); members of the special effects crew help out in the handling of the monsters in a battle scene cut from the final print (near right top).

Haruo Nakajima, wearing white shirt, holds up the Godzilla suit during a break in shooting (near right bottom); Godzilla raids again (above).

Meanwhile, Ib (ANGRY RED PLANET) Melchior, referred to Warners by Forrest J. Ackerman (editor of Famous Monsters magazine), was hired to produce a script for a film that would utilize most of the monster footage from GOJIRA RAIDS AGAIN, woven around a new story with new effects.

The result was "The Volcano Monsters," a scenario in which two perfectly preserved monsters (now merely dinosaurs, named "Tyrannosaur" and "Ankylosaur") are found in a dormant Japanese volcano and shipped via aircraft carrier to San Francisco for study. Of course the beasts are not dead, reviving on route to the Bay City, and all hell breaks loose when they engage in a struggle to the death. Judging by a 1978 reading of the script, this author still feels that GIGANTIS was the better treatment.

Of course new scenes of the monsters were to be shot, some full scale props and appendages to be constructed in the states by AIP, and Toho's monster crew, headed by Toshimitsu, was commissioned by Warner Brothers to provide the monster suits. Due to the wear and tear of shooting, the originals were way beyond repair, so new ones were made and shipped to AIP in 1957.

Effectsman Bob Burns and his partner, working on the saucer destruction scene in INVASION OF THE SAUCERMEN, discovered (while hiding from the miniature blast) that the crates they were using for cover were emblazoned with Japanese characters. Upon opening the crates, they discovered the monster suits for Godzilla and Angilas! Burns tried out one of the suits but it was too small for his All-American frame (Paul Blaisdell, AIP's monster maker, was probably perfect for them). In the end the suits were never used.

GOJIRA RAIDS AGAIN finally flickered across U.S. theater screens as GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER in 1959, and was co-billed with TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE, to insure proper teen saturation at the local bijou. The films did moderate box office.

The Americanization was produced by Paul B. Schreibman (who is currently the representative for Tsuburaya Productions in the U.S.) and directed by Hugo Grimaldi (THE HUMAN DUPLICATORS). Grimaldi did a "great" job of copying D.C.A.'s 1957 U.S. version of RODAN, aping that film's opening montage of stock military footage, backed by ominous narrative warning of man's reckless advances in science, the bomb, and so forth, then seguing into the actual film—now narrated by the main character, describing everything . . . every action, and every reaction. A film you can enjoy blindfolded! Tsukioka's voice was supplied by Keye(GREMLINS) Luke, also the narrator of RODAN; but his earnest readings are no match for Grimaldi's script, which falls flat whenever a character opens his mouth, let alone utter a line of pathos. To match the Japanese phrase "bakayaro" ("stupid idiot"—thoug in the context of the script, it comes out more like "Don't be silly'), Grimaldi phonetically inserts "banana oil"—a particularly bizarre example of the way American film producers were afraid to let these films stand on their own merits. Others providing the intonations included George Takei and Paul Frees. The dubbing can be summed up in one character's lines: "This is bad. This IS bad!" So full of incomprehensible dialogue that makes you wonder if you're hearing English, GIGANTIS will drive you mad.

Stock footage runs rampant throughout the Americanization—scenes of Japanese commerce, crowd scenes, people praying, and even U.S. war propaganda footage, quite badly disguised—one shot, used to describe the military's mobilization, is an animated graph of the Imperial Japanese government's wave of conquest (the secret meaning of the "sun ray" flag), and the other is a scene of a stage performance (shown twice), where you can see the swastika on a Nazi flag poorly obscured by a optical censor dot! Even the opening credits are composed of sundry scenes of a burning Osaka and the military might seen in the film (nary a monster visable).

As if this weren't enough, in the early staff meeting scene with Dr. Yamane, Grimaldi inserted a lecture on the creation of the world, ("thousands of years ago"!), and the age of the dinosaurs. With its childish special effects (some of them stock from ROBOT MONSTER and the Mexican cheapie ADVENTURAS EN LA CENTRO DEL LA TIERA), this pathetic sequence is all too often credited in the West to Tsuburaya, and through its addition accounts (in microcosm) for the poor reputation these films have acquired in the States.

Godzilla is "finished off" when the military entombs the monster, via jet-bomber attack, under a glacier on Shinko Island during the film's finale (not Iwato, the island where Godzilla and Angilas are first sighted). Angilas (not "Angurus" or "Anzilla") would not appear again until DESTROY ALL MONSTERS! in 1968.

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KING KONG VS. GOJIRA—1962 (KING KONG VS. GODZILLA—1963) Director: Ishiro Honda; Scenario: Shinichi Sekizawa; Music: Akira Ifukube; Photography: Hajime Koizumi; Special Effects Director: Eiji Tsuburaya; Film Register No.#12823; Date of Release: 8/11/62; Running Time: 98 minutes; U.S. Running Time: 90 minutes.

THIS, PART OF TOHO'S 30th ANNIVERSARY celebration schedule, is the first Godzilla opus to be shot in color (Eastman) and widescreen (Tohoscope). It's also the first film of the series to feature a subplot excoriating the evils of commercialism, and to a degree, blind faith in science—a running theme throughout the 1960s films.

"Stop-motion" effects master Willis O'Brien had been trying to get his project "King Kong vs. Frankenstein" off the ground for years. When offers didn't flood in, the project was revamped and the antagonist changed to "The Ginko." It was about this time that John Beck of Universal International stepped in, changed the treatment (to "King Kong vs. Prometheus") and then contacted Toho, thinking it a natural for co-production.

"KING KONGVS.GODZILLA was hailed on both sides of the Pacific as the Battle of the Century."

Toho felt that the idea could serve as an excellent return vehicle for their Godzilla character, and a worthy centerpiece for the studio's 30th Anniversary—so, the final project became "King Kong vs. Godzilla." The film utilized the talents of Ishiro Honda, Eiji Tsuburaya, Shinichi Sekizawa and Akira Ifukube to produce what is still the highest grossing entry of the series in Japan.

KING KONG creator-director Merian C. Cooper gave his blessings to the project, and the rights to use the simian's name and likeness were cleared by RKO Radio Pictures (or what was left of it at the time). Toho sent out a bilingual press release, a letter of acceptance from both monsters, who "agreed" to fight what would be hailed as "the Battle of the Century."

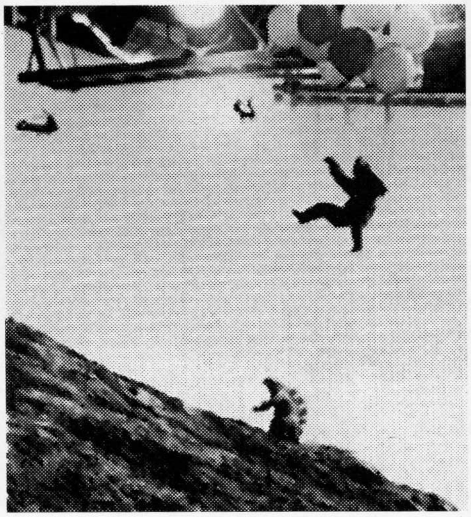
John Beck was placed in charge of the production of the Universal version. This was severely edited (by Peter Zinner, Oscar winner for THE DEER HUNTER), contained newly shot footage in an attempt to explain the events at hand, and utilized stock film from THE MYSTERIANS (Honda, 1957), to represent a telecommunications satellite and a flood scene. The voice-dubbing sounds as though the actors (Les Tremayne being among them) are speaking with cardboard boxes over their heads—very unnatural. Sequences were shuffled, scrambled, and the overall process badly handled under the direction of Thomas Montgomery (from a drab dubbing script by Paul Mason and Bruce Howard). His hapless new footage wasted a striking amount of time with infantile exposition sequences delivered by Michael Keith, Harry Holcombe (before pushing lemonade) and James Yagi. Jettisoned are some fine character and comedy exposition, as well as adding a flimsy line of dialogue, read over a newspaper, telling of the crash of a character's plane—when the visual shows a photograph of a steamship (sunk offscreen by Godzilla)! The earlier connecting scene, aboard the ill-fated ship (with actors Kenji Sahara and Yoshibumi Tajima), ended up inexplicably on Universal's cutting room floor—probably to give Harry (EMPIRE OF THE ANTS) Holcombe more running time.

Honda's original, crisply edited by Reiko (DODES'KADEN) Kaneko, is vibrant, fast-paced, intelligent, and subtle. Combined with Tsuburaya's excellent visual effects and Ifukube's tremendous score, the film is irresistible entertainment. But, this is evident in the Japanese version only.

The American version scraps Ifukube's orchestrations (except for the Farou Island dance music) in favor of Peter Zinner's mishmash of Universal's own home-brewed stock horror compositions (composed by Henry Mancini). Gasp as Godzilla appears to the strains of CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON! These clips are ill-fitting and fail to do anything but make the movie feel like a low-class production.

Ifukube's score is fast and furious—in ad-

Tsuburaya, in foreground, helps the "Octopus Wrangler" to place their actor to his proper mark before shooting (right); Tsuburaya and Shinichi Sekizawa, in grey suit, discuss plotting over lunch at the Toho Salon (below right); The miniature Kong, is about to be dropped on the miniature Godzilla, on the slopes of Mt. Fuji (below).



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dition to the well-known Farou Island song, the music boasts a larger orchestration of the horror-of-Godzilla theme from the original, a lovely march for giant balloons, and a striking twelve-tone piece for the appearance of the giant octopus.

Hajime Koizumi's Tohoscope photography is splendid, smooth and colorful. Teisho "Sadamasa" Arikawa's special effects photography has its high points (mainly during process shots), but at time is inconsistent, and lacks the proper amount of composition and low-angle photography to match the scale of the film. But overall, his work on the picture is quite good. On the insistance of Tsuburaya, Koichi Kawakita joined the team on this picture, becoming an assistant to Arikawa on the special effects photography crew, staying thier for several years under the watchful eyes of both Tsuburaya and Arikawa; they saw his potential—later in the sixties, Kawakita moved onto the optical animation department, under the Kishida brothers and work with optical effects genius, Minoru Nakano. The optical effects (blue screen traveling mattes, etc.) are for the most part, for Toho, nothing outstanding, just competent enough to be passable—with the standout being the scene featuring soldiers winding ropes around Kong before he is airlifted to Fuji; here there are some interesting things done with optical animation.

Being a Tsuburaya picture, there is an abundance of miniatures, a great deal of which are superbly executed and photographed. Outstanding among these are the Hokkaido landscapes, the Diet Building and Korakuen Amusement Park in Tokyo, and especially, the sets of Atami city and Atami Castle (in reality not an ancient castle—the structure, a tourist attraction, was built and opened earlier in1962).

Akira Watanabe changes the design of Godzilla considerably for this entry—now more stout and solid, he lends the impression of immovability and massive strength, elements well-translated into the prosthetic realization by Teizo Toshimitsu. An upper-half puppet was employed in fire-breathing shots excised from U.S. prints (excluding the theatrical trailers); other scale figures and a stop-motion model, were also created to make Godzilla live on film.

Two Kong suits were manufactured for his appearance in the film, neither matching Toshimitsu's craftsmanship of the Godzilla for this picture, and a pale imitation of the original Kong design. One has elongated arms with static hands, the other human-length appendages

"Asi anaroi a seke samoai, ke keletena ke keletena, ina mang fanadoro sa qu tia, magu nu nitu magu nitu,.rau rau rau"— the native chant of Farou Island by Akira Ifukube.

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Miniature builders work on the landscaping for one of the several Atami Castle miniature sets—this one is the "open-set" or open-air set, shot at Toho's small outdoor pool. (which was filled-in to make room for another soundstage in late 1985).

motion figure; several dolls of various scales and abilities; and a full-size Kong paw.

As mentioned, Tsuburaya has one stop-motion sequence, in which Godzilla "kangaroo-kicks" Kong—the shot, although jerky, is so lightning-quick that it provides the audience with quite a jolt.

Tsuburaya charged monster players Haruo Nakajima and Katsumi Tezuka with the task of choreographing the final battle, with only minor changes and advice coming from the visual effects director. This was the first Toho fantasy film in which Teruyoshi Nakano was on board as "Assistant Special Effects Director." Nakano had married producer Tomoyuki Tanaka's daughter, though Toho did not allow him Tsuburaya's "Director" credit until after the massive sucess of Moritani's SUMBERSION OF JAPAN in 1974.

The character relationships and dilemmas are better rounded and directed than in GOJIRA RAIDS AGAIN. Kenji Sahara (Kazuo Fujita) and Mie Hama (Fumiko) are in love, despite the disapproval of her brother (Sakurai, played by Tadao Takashima). Humorous diversion is provided by Yu Fujiki (as Kinsaburo Furue) and the amazing Ichiro Arishima, as the greedy Pacific Parmacutical Company president Tako, who "sponsors" Kong to remedy his tie-in television show's sagging ratings. Arishima, a dazzling physical comedian, even steals the show from the monsters in some scenes—perhaps his finest moment, cut from Universal's version, finds Tako picking a fight with a bystander who thinks Kong is a wimp. There is also a good rapport between Takashima and Fujiki as the struggling TTV cameramen sent to find the "Giant God of Farou," in reply to a rival company/network's coverage of the Seahawk submarine expedition. The rest of the cast features a heavy percentage of the Toho stable, with Akihiko Hirata and Jun Tazaki in supporting roles as a scientist and a military commander, respectively. The irrepressible Ikio Sawamura shows up as the witch doctor of Farou Island, with Yoshio Kosugi, snarling pidgin English, as his chief. Except for the magnetic dancing girl played by Akemi Negishi, Honda has the actors in the Farou scenes acting like cartoon characters, particularly TTV translator Konno (played by Senkichi Omura); the frenetic Tako is even more laughable, but the film is without contempt. There's a broad, raucous good nature evident in this picture—and in Honda's GORATH earlier the same year—that wasn't present in the original and has endeared it to generations of moviegoers worldwide.

> **"There's a broad, raucous good nature evident in this picture..."**

Now, to dispel two popular rumors about the film, which persistently appear in both shady periodicals and high-brow tomes:

1) The "Kong" in this picture **is not** related in any way but **name** to the creature in the1933 film. The giant simian in Honda's film grew to its great proportions from absorbing "Faroulacton" into his body by consuming the narcotic red berries of Farou Island.

2) There was never **and never have there been**, "two separate endings" to KING KONG VS. GOJIRA. Both the U.S. and Japanese versions conclude in basically the same fashion—the only difference being in the two versions as a whole themselves: the original production, the way Honda and Tsuburaya meant it to be seen; and the Beck version, which makes mere colorization of classics seem tame.

Oh, and which monster loses? John Beck, hands down.

MOTHRA AGAINST GOJIRA—1964 (GODZILLA VS. THE THING—1964 aka GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA; GODZILLA AGAINST MOTHRA; MOTHRA AGAINST GODZILLA; alt. MOTHRA VS. GODZILLA) Director: Ishiro Honda; Scenario: Shinichi Sekizawa; Music: Akira Ifukube; Photography: Hajime Koizumi; Special Effects Director: Eiji Tsuburaya; Film Register No.#13523; Date of Release: 4/29/64; Running Time: 89 minutes; U.S. Running Time: 88 minutes.

THIS IS THE PINNACLE ACHIEVEMENT of the Godzilla series and of Toho's SF/monster cycle. The film is also the first cross-over of two separate Toho screen characters from previous pictures, "Godzilla" and "Mothra," and the last of such pictures to bear an overtly political angle, presenting as human villains exploiters and politicians who should be at loggerheads but instead feed off each other's excesses. Such political references were unusually blatant and current, probably due to the then-impending 1964 elections (though Sekizawa says that these elements, present also in the team's ATRAGON, four months earlier, were probably subconcious on his part).

Shinichi Sekizawa's imaginative script is a fast-paced, yet richly detailed scenario, delicately tracing a number of human stories through the grander web of its plot. The monster scenes, while plentiful, do not preclude characterization and character development—Honda's swift pacing and sense of scale do not desert him as he guides the interplay between the film's three lead actors, Akira Takarada (Ichiro Sakai), Yuriko Hoshi (Junko Nakanishi; named "Yoka" in the U.S. version), and Hiroshi Koizumi (Dr. Miura). These three carry much of the film and keep it alive and interesting whether there's an effect in sight or not. Honda also drew top-notch performances from two of his regulars, Yoshifumi Tajima—wonderful as the greedy, tragic entrepreneur Kumayama, the pawn of the opportunist Jiro Torahatta, essayed by the versatile Kenji Sahara.

Takeo Kita's art direction is superb and production values, from the ordinary set changes to the oversized sets created to bring the tiny twin "Ailenas" (Yumi and Emi Ito) to reality. Akira Watanabe's special visual art direction well displays the ambition of the production, and the artist surpasses himself with the many massive effects soundstages, most eye-filling in glorious Tohoscope.

Partly due to his first career, as an avant-garde still photographer, Honda's films always have a distinctive photographic style which is difficult to appreciate on scanned television prints. Most of his best pictures were shot by Hajime Koizumi, whose live action lensing is excellent as usual, brilliantly incorporating the Tohoscope format. Teisho Arikawa's special effects photography ranks among his finest for Tsuburaya—the film's color scheme really is dazzling.

The production's special visual effects undoubtedly represent some of Tsuburaya's most ambitious and diverse undertakings for a monster film. He and his team muster and deploy nearly every technique at their dis-

Tsuburaya checks the set-up for the combatants in MOTHRA AGAINST GODZILLA before a take during the climatic battle (opposite); Honda directs Kenji Sahara, as Torahotta, while Yoshibumi Tajima unfolds prop map—note sound boom (left); Godzilla destroys miniature of Nagoya Castle—part of this take was unused (below).

posal: miniatures of various scales, glass and matte paintings, optical animation, blue screen, mechanicals, pyrotechnics, wire-work, hand puppets, stop-motion, marionettes, the time honored men-in-monster suits, and more. This is the most miniature-filled production of the Kaiju Eiga, aside from MOTHRA (Honda, 1961), and features all manners of military hardware, real and imagined—jets, bombers, helicopters, tanks, battleships, ad infinitum.

The film's monsters, Godzilla, the adult Mothra, and its twin larvae, get the "star treatment" from Teizo Toshimitsu and his workshop. Two identical Godzilla suits were created for this feature, so remarkably alike, that any difference is barely noticeable, even upon close examination of still photographs. A masterpiece for Watanabe and Toshimitsu, Godzilla's design is sleek, yet massive, sublimely evil—invoking the legends of the *bakneko* or "ghost cats" of Japanese myth. It is this particular version that is the most favored among both Japanese fans and American enthusiasts. A rubbery upper-lip was added to the main suit's design to provide a "life-like" effect, but was phased out after this picture. Other prosthetics created to bring Godzilla to the screen were: a hand puppet (used in two shots), a miniature doll, a stick puppet, and even a mock-up tail for close-up shots.

There were numerous incarnations of Mothra, chiefly Toshimitsu's magnificent three meter-long, nine meter wingspanned, wire-operated mechanical marionette adult, some of whose many intricate functions were operated via radio control. The two varying scale adult mechanicals from MOTHRA were revived, as was an adult stick puppet. As for the twin larvae, Toshimitsu's crew created two swimming mechanicals and two crawling mechanicals (the latter two operated via radio control).

Employed in various fashions, these fabrications were combined with the aforementioned special photographic techniques to create some memorably grand visuals. One of the most striking of all Tsuburaya's screen images is the use of a high-speed lens in conjunction with a type of strobe-camera effect, which lends the battle between the Godzilla suit(s) and the Mothra marionette a very unusual screen movement, unlike any other of its type. At best, it can be described as a form of stop-motion photography, but with a greater illusion of reality—witness the shots of Mothra hovering over a downed Godzilla—a testimony to the camerawork of Teisho Arikawa and Mototaka (GODZILLA'S REVENGE) Tomioka.

The optical photography and alignment, by Yoichi Manoda and Hiroshi Mukoyama respectively, is some of the finest from Toho's "Golden Age" of special effects. Better yet are the optical team's skillfull and dramatically excellent optical animation of Godzilla's radioactive breath (with illuminating dorsal fins) and the dynamic sizzle of the military's "artificial lightning," used in an attempt to kill the behemoth. Opticals animator Minoru Nakano would go on to be Japan's premiere optical effects artist, later establishing his own optical house, Den Film Effects.

Suffice it to say that this film may well have the most visuals per minute than any other Tsuburaya monster outing. Some effects are better than others, but the sheer number of them is so staggering, that the film stands as Master Tsuburaya's most outstanding monster work.

Booming in the foreground—for his scoring is the very antithesis of humble "background music"—is a tremendous score by Akira Ifukube. At once driving, emotional, steely, and vital, the music gives the entire spectacle an extra jolt. With the stirring opening theme (a further fortifying of the "Godzilla Theme" heard in KING KONG VS. GOJIRA), the songs of the Ailenas, the wrath, death and rebirth of Mothra, the final battle (a deafening piece that lasts

The crew stands in for Mothra for a close-up take inset: puppeteer takes a break; Susumu Fujita (with both hands on table) and Honda discuss the next shot (below); Tsuburaya discusses the monster's motivation (overleaf).

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almost nine minutes; after completing a successful take of it, the musicians of the Toho Studio Symphony gave themselves and conductor Ifukube an ovation), and the peaceful, happy ending, Ifukube raises goose bumps on your arms and causes the hair on the back of your neck stands straight up with this incredible score. What can mere words express?

The English-language version, by Titra Productions for American International Pictures, ranks as probably the finest translation presented of any Japanese fantasy film, rivaled only by MOTHRA or prehaps KING KONG ESCAPES. A great deal of work went into the dubbing of this film, and if the results are not exactly perfect, they are certainly creditable.

Jim Nicholson at AIP came up with the exploitive title "Godzilla vs. the Thing" and a mysterious ad campaign geared towards making audiences go to the theater to find out what "the Thing" was. Releasing the film as "Godzilla vs. Mothra" and "Godzilla vs. the Giant Moth" were contemplated, but did not fit the AIP exploitation bill as well as GODZILLA VS. THE THING.

Only fractions of footage ended up on the cutting room floor. The opening credits have been shortened; missing is a shot of newspaper headlines ballyhooing Happy Enterprises' giant incubator; the Ailenas song in the garden on Infant island is abridged; the shot of Kumayama falling backwards, with a bleeding bullet-hole in his forehead, was excised; and a final shot of the three main characters facing the setting sun with their backs to the camera, as the kanji character for "the end" optically appears, was clipped.

At the same time, the AIP version contains some several minutes of scenes in which the U.S. military is asked to help the Japanese Self Defense Forces to defeat Godzilla. This brings a Navy convoy of missile ships into Japanese waters to battle the goliath with America's powerful "Frontier Missiles." An outstanding display of miniature photography and pyrotechnics (one of the film's best dramatic and special effects sequences), are contained in the original scenario by Sekizawa (and is scratched out of Honda's shooting script)—but may have been excluded from domestic prints due to political considerations. The film already had a blatant distaste for shifty politicians in its screenplay, due to the then-impending 1964 national elections.

Honda, Sekizawa, and Tsuburaya's visions have, for once, been spared by American editors, and left intact for overseas audiences to enjoy. The power of the scenario and direction stand on their own merits, without the "help" of meddling foreign studio executives.

Hardcore Godzilla fans in Japan regard this film as the last entry in the Godzilla series, and believe that Toho only brought the monster back for juvenile audiences only. To them, the twin Mothras killed Godzilla once and for all.

THE GREATEST BATTLE ON EARTH—1964 (GHIDRAH—THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER—1965 aka MONSTER OF MONSTERS, GHIDORAH; THREE GIANT MONSTERS—THE GREATEST BATTLE ON EARTH; alt., THE BIGGEST FIGHT ON EARTH) Director: Ishiro Honda; Scenario: Shinichi Sekizawa; Music: Akira Ifukube; Photography: Hajime Koizumi; Special Effects Director: Eiji Tsuburaya; Film Register No.#13752; Date of Release: 12/20/64; Running Time: 93 minutes; U.S. Running Time: 85 minutes.

THIS PICTURE COULD STILL BE SEEN as a metaphor of China's emerging nuclear arsenal in the form of the space dragon—it was the year that saw China test its first atomic bomb. Yet the serious tone of the previous film is abandoned in favor of a return to the humorousness that helped make KING KONG VS. GOJIRA so lucrative. While not as essentially satirical as KONG, this fifth film in the series did signal which way the pendulum was starting to swing.

Scenarist Shinichi Sekizawa ingeniously combines Godzilla, Rodan, and Mothra into the screenplay, along with the newest Toho creation "King Ghidorah" aka "Ghidrah." As with the previous Sekizawa scripts, screen time is not only relegated to the monsters—the human drama gets equal pages, and is still one of the film's main concerns. The three-lead format of the previous film (also employed in MOTHRA) is repeated, supplemented by Sekizawa's usual raft of eccentric supporting roles.

The first third of the picture is quite straightforward, slowly mounting and building up speed to the inevitable battle of the monsters. The middle third is shakier, almost jerry-rigged, until King Ghidorah soars into the forefront and the "Greatest Battle on Earth" begins.

One of these "shaky" factors is the characterization of the hitmen who are after Mas Dorina Salno ("Selina Salno" in the U.S.—Akiko Wakabayashi), a Princess who thinks she's a Venusian (Martian in the U.S.) and is wandering around Japan making accurate predictions about the appearance of monsters. Honda allows the assistant hitmen to camp it up like amateur Jimmy Cagneys, while chief assassin Malmess ("Malness" in the U.S.) acts like a robot. Honda had originally cast Yoshio Tsuchiya as Malmess, but the actor couldn't get away from the torturous schedule of Kurosawa's RED BEARD and was replaced by the evil-looking but wooden Hisaya Ito.

The rest of the cast turn in credible performances, led by model-turned-actor Yosuke Natsuki as Detective Shindo, and supported by Yuriko Hoshi (Naoko Shindo), Hiroshi Koizumi (Professor Murai), Takashi Shimura (Dr. Tsukamoto), and Akihiko Hirata (Chief Okita), with neat cameos for favored bit players Senkichi Omura (a victim of Rodan) and Ikio Sawamura (an honest fisherman). Kenji Sahara had a day off and was brought in to play Naoko's editor—a tiny part for such a star, but Toho actors were more inclined to lend their presences to films of directors they liked, when their schedule permitted.

Eiji Tsuburaya really delivers a punch with the film's bountiful scenes of trick photography, which dominate a large portion of the production. Synonymous with Tsuburaya are the various scale miniatures, matte paintings, opticals, and various machinations which are employed to generate the illusions witnessed in this fantasy.

The miniature department had its work cut out for it in representing realistic scale vistas of Yokohama, Tokyo and the Japanese countryside. All are executed with meticulous detail, the backdrop painting of Mt. Fuji being of particular excellence. With little in the way of military machinery this time (the elections having been decided), it seems the miniature crew's focus went to landscapes. Much of the picture

takes place in and around the Kurobe Gorge, where King Ghidorah's meteor-egg lies.

Hiroshi Mukoyama and the optical effects crew again provide outstanding optical effects. Among the most impressive are the shots of Rodan flying against the night sky, achieved through a simple pairing of cel animation and optical matting—a very striking effect, a variant of which is also used to show King Ghidorah looming over the populace. Another is the dynamic destructive force of Ghidorah's lighting bolts, dazzling forked bursts whose power you can almost feel as the dragon spits them from its three maws. But the standout optical sequence is surely the birth of King Ghidorah—a skillful combination of pyrotechnics, editing, timing, optical enhancement, cel animation, and miniature operation, painstakingly assembled by Mukoyama and his staff of animators—and easily the most memorable visual moment in the film. (The same sequence was reused in DESTROY ALL MONSTERS!; and an alternate version that was prepared from a different angle, can be seen in TOHO SPFX OUTTAKES video, released in 1987.)

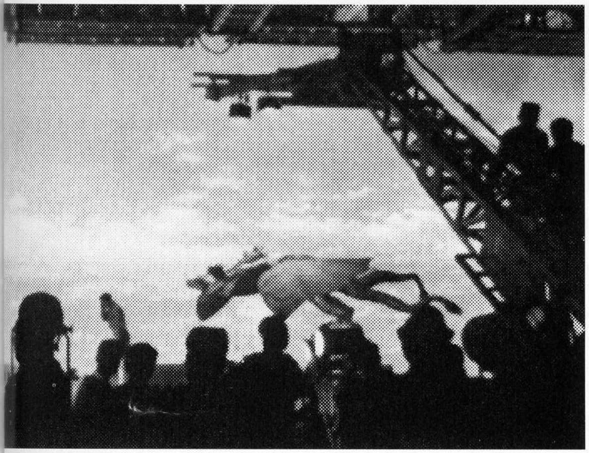
Godzilla's design by Akira Watanabe is consistent with the previous film, and although Toshimitsu's and Kanji Yagi's realization remains close, you can notice that the monster is beginning to look homogenized. Several scaled-down models and puppets of Godzilla are used, as well as an articulated upper-half mechanical puppet (with very expressive features), all of which are identical to the two monster suits, resulting in an excellent interacting of various manifestations used to represent Godzilla and make him seem to come alive. No less work seems to have gone into building new representations of Rodan, although the overall design is silly and unconvincing—the antithesis of the initial menace and power of the original Rodan. Apparently, Tsuburaya went this route to lend the flying monster more facial expression for the picture, perhaps even to make him the clown of the picture, as Kong sometimes was. The bottom line, Rodan fails to achieve a favorable impression. Mothra's presence was achieved through the use of several props from MOTHRA AGAINST GOJIRA, and are passable, but could have been much better.

The film's demonic antagonist, King Ghidorah, is an awesome creation—a three-headed, bat winged, twin-tailed space dragon. The impressive suit and miniature machinations of the dragon were created by Teizo Toshimitsu, from original designs by Akira Watanabe, and based on the legendary "Yamata-no-Orochi" (seen in THE THREE TREASURES—Hiroshi Inagaki, 1959). Next to Godzilla, King Ghidorah is perhaps the most enduring and memorable menace to be brought to cinematic life by Toho. Suitably evil and equally impressive, Ghidorah is undeniably a masterpiece among Tsuburaya's myriad of monsters.

Before filming commenced, the space dragon was a multi-colored (three-toned) monster, not golden, as it finally does appear on film; the wings were rainbow-stripped, and the body was "spotted" in red, blue and gold. This version of Ghidorah does appear in color publicity shots, and used primarily for the original Japanese movie posters and advertisements. Even

"Honda approaches even the simplest shots with a sometimes breathtaking beauty—the picture is as honestly breathtaking as anything from the Lucasfilm stable."

Technicians checks miniatures between shots of Rodan's attack on Godzilla (below top); using a crane, Ghidorah soars above Tokyo; Honda shows the Peanuts, Yumi and Emi Ito, thier point of view for this shot (opposite).



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though the space dragon flies across the screen in it famous golden-hue, Tsuburaya originally had planned the triple-threat to be a devilish red.

There are a few flaws in an otherwise entertaining gem—the monster battle between Godzilla and Rodan in the last-third of the film is clumsily staged and shot, as if the staff had run out of ideas. In sharp contrast, their first conflict in the second-third of the picture is incredibly well done, rivaling MOTHRA AGAINST GOJIRA for its awesome illusions of reality. Tsuburaya recoups in time, if to a lesser extent, for the monster's final battle against King Ghidorah—but are more successful as a whole, than in part.

The only real embarrassing effects are in three places, one concerning miniatures, the other two dealing with physics. First, near the beginning of the film, when Princess Salno's airplane is destroyed with a bomb planted by assassins, the miniature just blows apart, in what seems to be an anti-climatic display of pyrotechnics—a larger, colorful explosion, in slower motion, would have been better dramatically. Second, when Godzilla throws the defeated Ghidorah off a cliff, the triple-dome seems to glide, Peter Pan-like, down to earth. And third, at the climax of the story, when the assassin, Malmess, meets his end—by catching a plummeting boulder! This defect could have been avoided in the editing process, but was not (for reasons unknown; insert shots like these were often shot by assistant directors who didn't know better), and is the main blemish in the film.

Honda's direction this time around, leans toward a MOTHRAesque dreamlike approach, an ethereal feeling already present in Sekizawa's fairy-taleish scenario. The documentarian approach he favored with his black-and-white pictures became increasingly supplemented over time by a more fanciful, often surrealistic atmosphere. He approaches this film as primarily a big, colorful jack-in-the-box, framing even the simplest shots with a sometimes breathtaking beauty. Seen in its original version on a wide screen, the picture is as honestly breathtaking as anything from the Lucasfilm stable.

Akira Ifukube's compositions are heavily backed by the strains of a harp, underlining his usual bag of strong, ominous, and brash intonations, to further express a fabulous, fairy-tale atmosphere.

The English-language adaptation was brought to stateside screens by Walter-Read Sterling/Continental Films, less than a year after the film's original release. Under the title, GHIDRAH—THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER, was double-billed with the Elvis Presley vehicle HARUM SCARUM. GHIDRAH's dubbing, provided by Joe Bellucci is stilted, a barely adequate English script—an improvement over Grimaldi's GIGANTIS, at least. The best written and delivered dialouge is the translation read over the Ailenas' song "Call Happiness"—composed by Hiroshi Miyagawa (not Yasushi Miyagawa as listed in the U.S. credits), one of Ifukube's students and composer of the animated movie/teleseries SPACE BATTLESHIP YAMATO.

Scenes were shifted around, completely changing the mood and flow of the original, making the film feel awkward in places. Kenji Sahara's cameo as Naoko's boss, is reduced to a breif one-liner—the rest of his minimal appearance ended up on the cutting room floor. Godzilla's entrance into Yokohama harbor is so rearranged that first he's on land, then back in the water, and vice versa!

Sound effects (supervised by Hisashi Shimonaga, with location sound recording by Honda's and Kurosawa's favorite, Fumio Yanoguchi) were noticeably detailed—as the main characters head closer to the battlefront, you can hear the monsters in the distance. A definite minus is the removal of several movements of Ifukube's score—and the augmentation of poor and noisy canned filler, some of which ran directly against the tone Ifukube established in the original print.

More minuses occur via the deletion of some of the film's best effects shots—for example, some of the Yokohama harbor and city destruction scenes. A major mistake was made in removing a shot of Rodan hovering over the crater of Mt. Aso, as buses escape in the foreground. This ominous shot, and Ifukube's accustomed rumblings, are both inexplicably cut.

Despite the blemishes, both American and Japanese, the film's abundance of special effects, imaginative script, great direction, and wonderful scoring all add up to help make this production "magical."

It is commonly believed that Godzilla became a hero starting with this picture, although he is violent throughout most of the film. The truth is, Godzilla would not become a truly heroic character until the 1970s, and these recent treatments more than the characterization in itself, have led to this popular misconception of Godzilla in particular and the Japanese fantasy film in general.

THE GREAT MONSTER WAR—1965 (MONSTER ZERO—1970 aka GODZILLA VS. MONSTER ZERO; INVASION OF THE ASTRO MONSTER; alt. INVASION OF THE ASTROS) Director: Ishiro Honda; Scenario: Shinichi Sekizawa; Music: Akira Ifukube; Photography: Hajime Koizumi; Director of Special Effects: Eiji Tsuburaya; Film Register No.#14151; Date of Release: 12/19/65; Running Time: 94 minutes.; U.S. Running Time: 90 minutes.

ANOTHER DEPARTURE FOR TOHO, this production combines elements of the "Monster Film" and the "Space/Invasion Film" into a unique mixture of THE GREATEST BATTLE ON EARTH and THE EARTH DEFENSE FORCE (THE MYSTERIANS), resulting in a format that would be widely imitated in most of Daiei Studios' GAMERA pictures, and Toho's own Godzilla entries for the 1970s.

This was an attempt at forging a new direction for Toho's monster cycle, which at that time was also being explored from a different angle in Toho's revolutionary "Frankenstein" productions. All three efforts were co-produced with Henry G. Saperstein's United Productions of America (UPA—listed in the Japanese credits as "Benedict Productions", as in "Benedict Arnold," perhaps communicating Saperstein's viewpoint as well as anything).

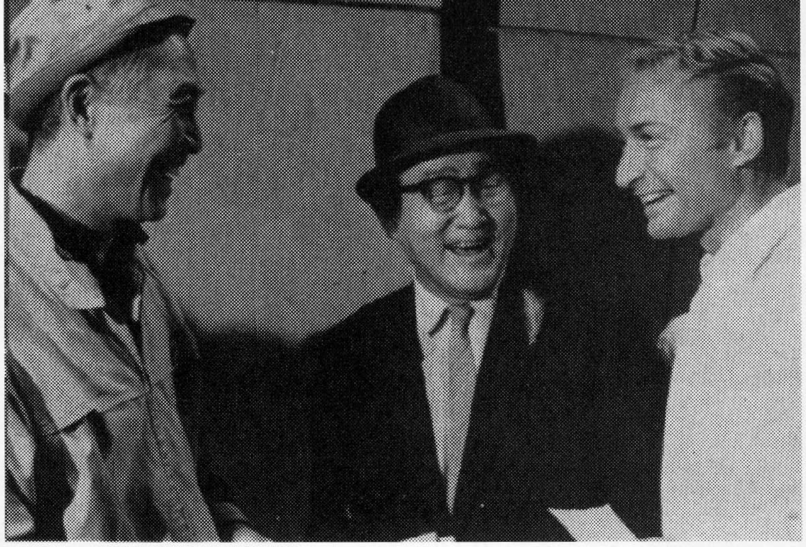
Sekizawa's scenario, while witty, is laced with heavier drama than in THE GREATEST BATTLE ON EARTH, while treatment of the monsters is loose, and increasingly humorous. The script has a sparkle to it, but could be seen as more deeply flawed even than GOJIRA RAIDS AGAIN—the whole first half of the picture seems to be rendered meaningless when the X-ites turn out to have been controlling King Ghidorah all along. If they could control him, then they have no need to dicker with the Earthlings for possession of Godzilla and Rodan—as they amply demonstrate by setting up Earth bases without anyone's permission or notice. But, since the two terran monsters had beaten Ghidorah in the past, securing control of these monsters would insure a swifter conquest of the Earth—the X-ites place Godzilla and Rodan in Asia destroying everything in their paths, as the triple-dome devastates the United States (off screen), before the three are releaved of the aliens' grip, for a climatic confrontation in Japan.

The structure of the film is such that this point is easy to overlook, largely due to the ever-professional hand of Ishiro Honda, whose direction is as speedy and compact as ever, especially with the fluid transitions from scene to scene.

Aside from the light treatment of the monsters in parts, the film's focus is quite adult, notably in its handling of its characters Glenn (Nick Adams) and Miss Namikawa (Kumi Mizuno). In a definite climate change for a Toho monster picture, the audience is indirectly informed that he and she have slept together (this in a dialogue exchange between Glenn and Fuji, played by Akira Takarada).

Despite the slight inconsistencies, the film is pure fun and excitement. Part of the reason for this is the interplay between Takarada and Adams, who, always bouncing one-liners off each other, seem like old pals who've spent a lot of time in space together. The gruffly paternal Doctor Sakurai (Jun Tazaki) is well-handled, as is the indirect friction between Fuji and the gawky inventor Tetsuo (Akira Kubo); Glenn's amiable rapport with Tetsuo and Haruno Fuji (Keiko Sawai); and of course Namikawa, a tortured personality struggling between her loyalty for the "Controller of Planet X" (Yoshio Tsuchiya) and her desire to be with Glenn. By this time Honda's repertory of actors was quite well-set and their feel for the rhythms of the director and of one another is evident.

Nick Adams was in Japan, under a



three-picture deal with Benedict/Toho, which also included the monster film FRANKENSTEIN VS. BARAGON, and the spy-thriller THE KILLING BOTTLE (unreleased in the U.S., featuring Yoshio Tsuchiya as Adams' nemesis). Adams—signed after David Jassen said yes, then no, to the same contract—was very grateful to Toho for giving him the opportunity for meaty roles, after his popularity wained in the U.S.; unlike most of the Hollywood actors that followed him, he was also very popular with the cast and crew, particularily Yoshio Tsuchiya, an inveterate practical joker who started Adams' Japanese lessons by teaching him to say "I'm starving!" for "Good morning," and later, "How's it hang-ing'?" for "Pleased to meet you"—this latter incident reportedly caused a group of wealthy old ladies to shrink from him in horror. Adams quickly learned to dish it back, learning the real Japanese for "You're overacting!" during Tsuchiya's scenes as Controller of Planet X. Adams very much admired Tsuchiya, partly due to his work with Kurosawa, and asked if he could arrange for Toshio Mifune to dub Adams' voice for the Japanese versions. The reply: "Sure, can you get Henry Fonda to do mine?"

Hajime Koizumi again provides beautiful color photography and proves his skill in the Tohoscope format. Splendidly conceived are the alien-hideaway sets designed by Takeo Kita; no less so is his Earthbound "star restaurant." His Costume designs are also a definite plus.

Tsuburaya's effects as always are spectacular. The miniature work, drafted by Special Effects Art Director Akira Watanabe, is intricate and futuristic; especially of note are the Earth force's "A-Cycle Light-Ray Tanks" (the forerunner of the immensely popular "Maser Cannons" from WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS), the spaceships, and the miniature set of World Space Authority HQ. The ravaged surface of Planet X, is also well crafted, with a beautiful "horizont" backdrop painting of a rising Jupiter on the horizon.

Teizo Toshimitsu's Godzilla suit isn't too much different from before. The features are much rounder, more "fatty," and the head and the eyes have loomed larger in dimension—neotenous traits that lend little but unbelievability to the monster. The "Godzilla Jig" or "Gojira Shie," performed by the monster halfway into the picture, was suggested to Tsuburaya by Yoshio Tsuchiya, who felt that such a fillip was needed to lend Godzilla some wit and win audience sympathy. The jig was copied from a popular comic of the time, "Ahso Matsu-kun" (which Tsuburaya fancied), whose titular character would Shie!" whenever excited. As in the past, several scale models were also employed in the shooting—a "sleeping Godzilla" for the transport scenes, several receding scales for the P-1 ascent shots, a mechanical puppet for long shots, and a scale "air-lift Godzilla" for the last strike against Ghidorah. An added element in props incorporated a large-scale mock-up foot, used to crush miniatures buildings of equal proportions.

Rodan looks very much as he did in the last entry, THE GREATEST BATTLE ON EARTH—just as silly and comical, if not more so. As with the elements used to bring Godzilla to the screen, several smaller models were employed as well, but no large-scale foot.

King Ghidorah easily comes off best in this picture. The suit used is different than the previous, but not discernibly so. The carefully crafted miniature representations of the three-headed terror, combined with the use of the suit, are indistinguishable from one another, helping to craft a seamless illusion.

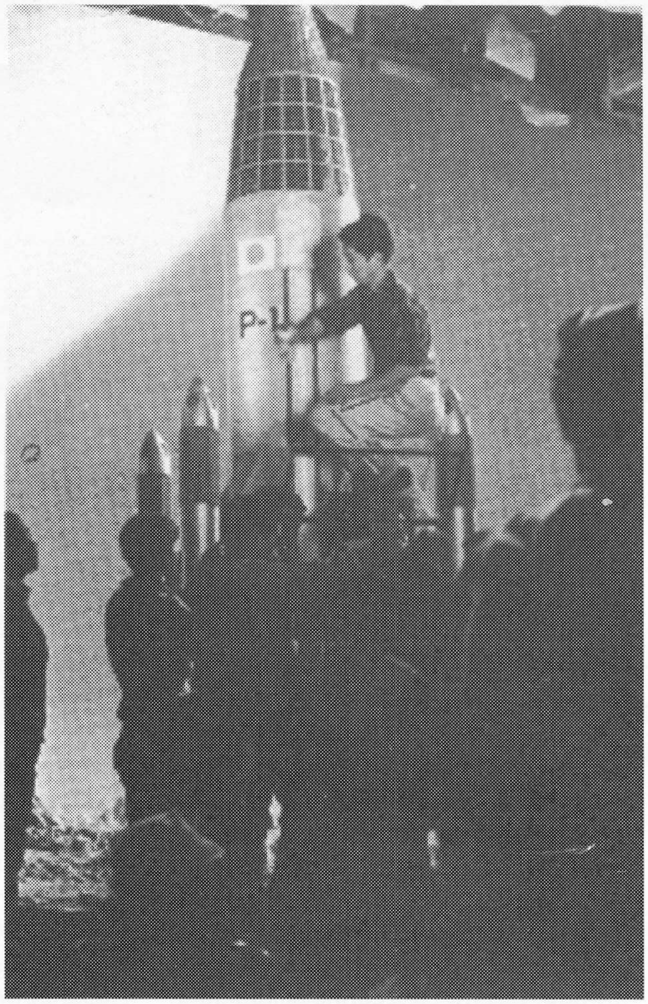
Other outstanding effects include a three-meter miniature of the P-1 spaceship, for surface shots on Planet X; an early form of "motion control," used for shots of the P-1 in space, and its preparations for landing on Planet X (this technique was originally used in BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE); the pyrotechnics; and all optical effects, especially those concerning the transportation preparations for Godzilla and Rodan.

The special visual photography, supervised once more by Teisho Arikawa and Mototaka Tomioka, is very well done—especially in the composition shots by Yuichi Manoda and Hiroshi Mukoyama. These composites are exceptionally clean, with high resolution and nearly flawless matte sync, due to the use of the Oxberry 1200 optical printer. At the time, the 1200 was state-of-the-art optical equipment—the only other one in the world in 1965 belonged to Disney—and was originally secured by Tsuburaya for use on his ULTRA Q teleseries.

Following suit is the spectacular

> **"The grand scope is largely due to the ever professional hand of Ishiro Honda, whose direction is as speedy and compact as ever, especially with the fluid transitions from scene to scene."**

Tsuburaya readies the monsters for combat (overleaf); Akira Takarada shows his appreciation to a model of Godzilla (overleaf left); Honda, Tsuburaya and Nick Adams enjoy a moment of levity on the set (overleaf center); the homogenized mug of Godzilla (overleaf right); the illustration on this page shows the scale of 3-meter model of the spaceship P-1.



optical animation contained in the film. From the most minor laser to the impressive scientific prowress of the monsters' transportation—the optical animation is amazingly dynamic. Also memorable are Ghidorah's lighting bolts (more accurate than in the previous entry), the X-ites demonstration of power on a radar tower at WSA HQ, and the clinical "termination" of Namikawa. The boys in the animation department really outdid themselves for THE GREAT MONSTER WAR.

Akira Ifukube's score is what one would expect of the master—an effective and powerful work. Ghidrah's motif is carried over from the previous picture, but the Godzilla-as-horror theme is abandoned, in favor of the Victory March from GOJIRA and BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE. Ifukube also converts the central theme from BARAN—MONSTER OF THE EAST to a rip-roaring battle theme. Best of all are the atmospheric themes involving the movements of the X-ites, and the pieces heard while on Planet X. A well rounded and dynamic score, highly evocative, and eerily effective.

The Americanization, supervised by S. Richard Krown, is pretty forced and stilted in the dubbing department, and the dialogue is ever so trite—especially in relation the villains, uttering, "That's another project you bungled!", and such. Nick Adams' voice went untouched and undubbed, as the original sound recording of his dialogue was retained and used.

Tsuchiya had written himself a line of dialogue, in the weirdly liquid X-ites' tongue (he said he looked to French, German, Japanese and the water-demon Kappa for inspiration), uttered twice in the film, was unfortunately cut from U.S. prints. Another truncation involved the removing of the original opening theme—the U.S. version opens with the same visuals, but backed by Ifukube's excellent piece from the alien's recovery of Godzilla and Rodan from their hibernation. The Americanization wins out here, as the movement is more effective as a prologue, and sets up the mood of the film more efficiently. Also it allows us to hear the movement without the intrusion of sound effects. Also the UPA release title, MONSTER ZERO, is quite an improvement over the dull, Japanese moniker.

As always, several prime special effects shots have been excised from the U.S. prints—the ascent of X-ite saucers, an overhead shot of them going screen right, carrying the monsters; and looking down on the saucers, rising from a convincing model of the Earth.

THE GREAT MONSTER WAR, is the last of the Godzilla series to ultilize the entire Toho special effects production team—Honda left to direct other pictures, returning to the series thrice only; Akira Watanabe soon went freelance; Hajime Koizumi went on to lens other pictures and to direct; Akira Ifukube would score only two more Godzillas; and Eiji Tsuburaya self reduced his role as main effects director, as he was preparing Teisho Arikawa to inherit that role.

Despite the many worthy elements, this marked the beginning of decline in the series as a whole, a decline which accelerated due to the installment of a new staff. The passing of Eiji Tsuburaya and the retirement of Ishiro Honda resulted in the end for Toho and Godzilla's reign as kings of Japanese SF/Monster Cycle, which came to an effective end in 1975. ●

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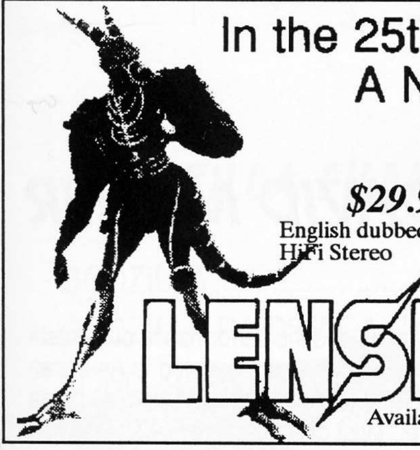

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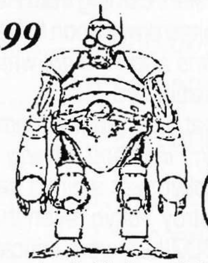

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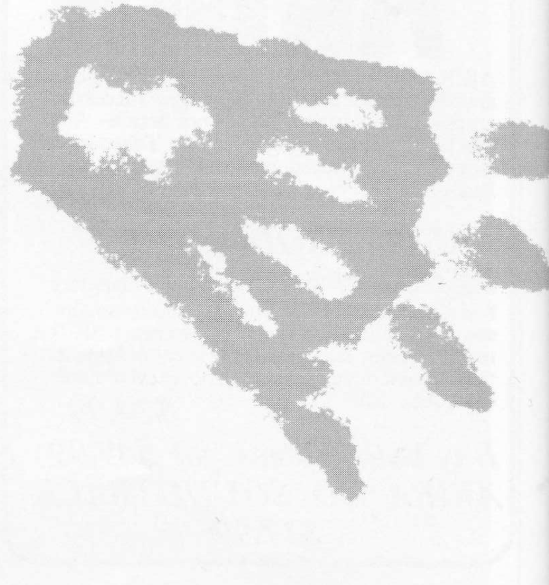
FIRST IMPRESSIONS



DAVID MILNER

When GOJIRA was released in Japan in 1954, it received critical acclaim. Virtually all of the film's reviews applauded the performance of Takashi Shimura as Dr. Yamane, and the special effects of Eiji Tsuburaya. However, when the picture was dubbed into English and presented to American audiences two years later, it was not as well received. For example, *The New York Times* called it "an incredibly awful film," and even went so far as to say that it was "too bad [that] respectable" theaters had to "lure children and gullible grown-ups with such fare." Most of the other reviews of the film were similarly uncomplimentary.

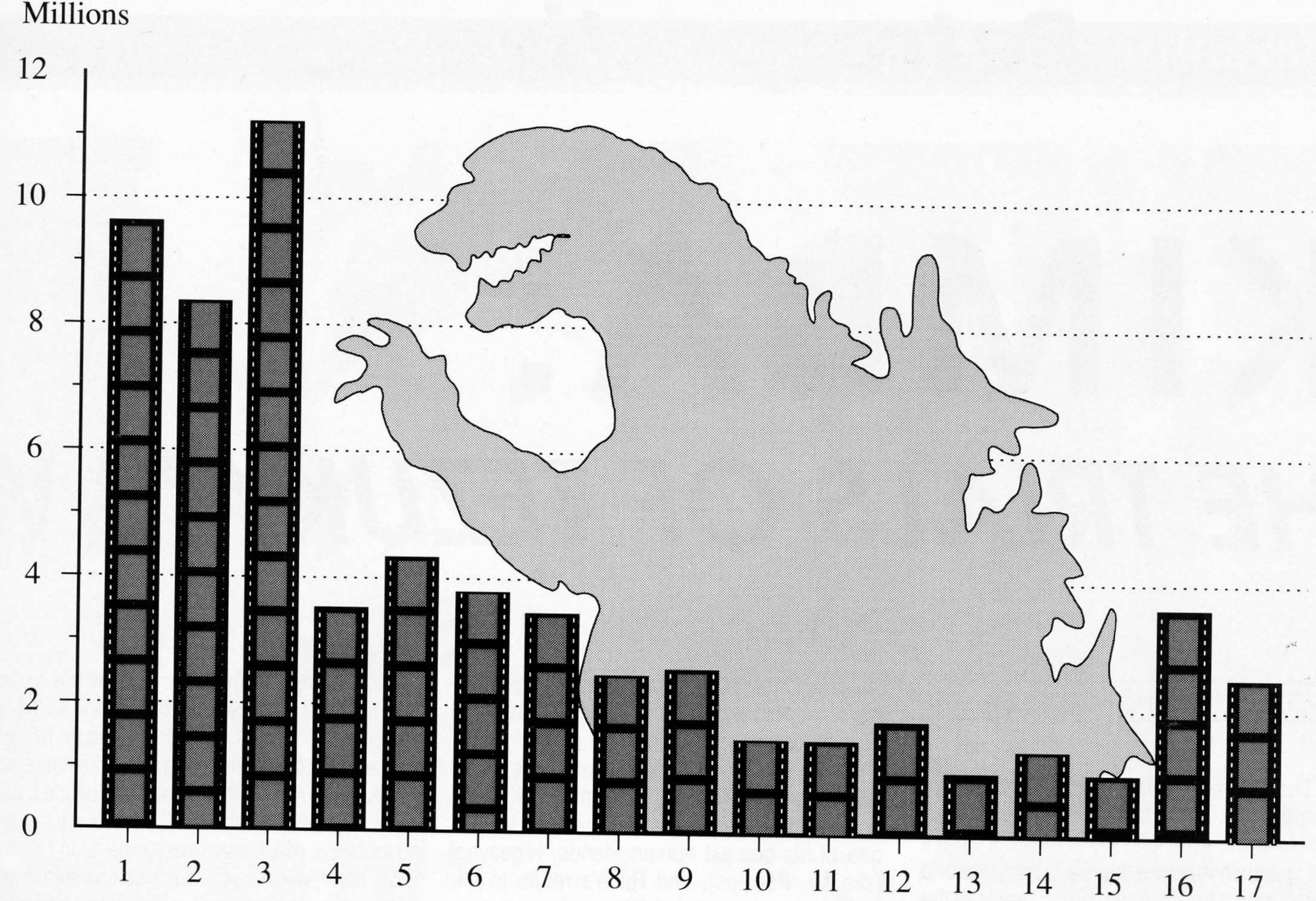
The release of GODZILLA—KING OF THE MONSTERS! came at a time when the United States was being inundated with horror and science fiction films. THE CREATURE WALKS AMONG US, INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS, THE WEREWOLF and WORLD WITHOUT END were all playing. This saturation did not bode well for any critical success for GODZILLA, which also was reflected in the *Times'* review, which stated that "as though there [were] not enough monsters coming from Hollywood, an organization that calls itself Jewell Enterprises has had to import one from Japan." The fact that the entire genre was looked down upon to begin with was also alluded to, as the article went on to say that the film belonged to "the category of cheap cinematic horror-stuff." *Films and Filming,* which called GODZILLA "an average horror film," and *Variety,* which referred to it as "a natural exploitation film," both mirrored this attitude.

Since it was the United States that dropped the atomic bombs on Japan, the involvement of such weapons in causing the emergence of Godzilla was a sensitive subject. Accordingly, *Films and Filming* declared the picture "politically a little unfortunate in a film of this nature that the implication of the story is that the wrecking of Tokyo was a direct [result] of too many H-bomb experiments." *The New York Times'* review could surprisingly find "no clear reason" for Godzilla to destroy Tokyo, even though it did recognize that he was "reactivated by H-bomb tests."

Many of those who reviewed GODZILLA were critical of the acting in it. *Newsweek* said that "Godzilla cannot act his way out of a paper bag," and *The New York Times* made reference to the "mildly horrified observers" of the destruction of Tokyo. *Variety* called the acting, "unimpressive," and Films and Filming referred to it as being "almost as grim as the monster." Even Raymond Burr's performance was criticized by both *Variety* and *The New York Times.*

The one aspect of the film that was looked upon most favorably was its special effects. Even though *Newsweek* saw Godzilla as a "400-foot-high plucked chicken," *Films and Filming* pointed out that the matte work was "up to Hollywood standards," and *Variety* said that the film's shortcomings were "more than offset by the startling special effects." It also praised GODZILLA's "horror sequences," calling them "excellently lensed."

Surprisingly, both Akira Ifukube's score and Ishiro Honda's direction received little attention. *Variety* did say, however, that the music helped to "point up" the picture's "elements," and that the directing served to "properly accent" the scenes of destruction.•



GODZILLA FILM ATTENDANCE IN JAPAN

GODZILLA	9,610,000
GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN	8,340,000
KONG KONG VS. GODZILLA	11,200,000
MOTHRA AGAINST GODZILLA	3,510,000
THE GREATEST BATTLE ON EARTH	4,320,000
THE GREAT MONSTER WAR	3,780,000
BIG DUEL IN THE SOUTH SEAS	3,450,000
SON OF GODZILLA	2,480,000
ATTACK OF THE MARCHING MONSTERS	2,580,000
ALL MONSTERS ATTACK	1,480,000
GODZILLA VS. HEODRAH	1,740,000
GODZILLA VS. GIGAN	1,780,000
GODZILLA VS. MEGALO	980,000
GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA	1,330,000
MECHAGODZILLA'S COUNTERATTACK	970,000
GODZILLA (1984)	3,600,000
GODZILLA VS. BIOLANTE	2,500,000

KIMBA:

THE TRIALS OF TEZUKA'S WH

FRED PATTEN and ROBIN LEYDEN

The story of KIMBA THE WHITE LION is a complex one. Many unexpected factors went into making it what it is, which was not what it was originally expected to be. Has the world gained or lost from the reality that replaced the ideal? To answer that, we have to determine what might have been if things were otherwise, and whether this alternate KIMBA would have been an improvement or a degradation.

First, there was a novel. Osamu Tezuka has produced several hundred works during his career, but two especially stand out. *Tetsuwan Atomu* (Mighty Atom) is undoubtably the most prestigious and intellectually ambitious work. But *Janguru Taitei* (Jungle Emperor, or, more freely, King of the Jungle) is his most popular single novel. [The King of the Jungle's profile is still used as the logo for one of Japan's biggest tour-bus companies; and is the mascot/logo for the Seibu Lions baseball team—ed.] This series, begun in 1950, was among Tezuka's first significant works. The completed novel ran about 640 pages; Tezuka was to go back and revise sections several times before he was satisfied with it.

Jungle Emperor is a parable of civilization, about what the concept really means, and what it should mean. It is told as the saga of a dynasty of intelligent white lions, as told through following the life of one of them, Leo, who attempts to improve the lot of all animals by replacing the cruel law of survival of the fittest with an animal civilization based upon mankind's. It follows Leo from his birth aboard a ship taking his mother to a zoo; his escape and his infancy as a pet in a large human city; his return to the jungle and his assumption of his martyred father's rule; his attempts to create a human-style society with farms and schools for all animals, despite the opposition of those unwilling to accept "unnatural changes"; the birth of his children, Runè and Rukyo; Runè's seperate adventures as a runaway to human civilization; and finally Leo's sacrifice of his own life to save one of his dearest human friends, Higeoyagi (aka Mr. Pompus), and Runè's return to the jungle to carry on his father's mission.

Osamu Tezuka wrote and drew this comic-art novel, with all its revisions, throughout most of the 1950s. This was the period in which he established himself as the comic-art king of Japan. At the end of the decade he determined to create his own animation studio to make cartoons for television. Mushi Productions opened in June 1961 and spent its first year and a half setting up for production.

Tezuka's first commercial animated TV series was MIGHTY ATOM, known in America as ASTROBOY, in 1963. *Mighty Atom* was chosen to lead off mostly because it was Tezuka's most popular work, but also because Mushi Productions was as yet inexperienced and Tezuka wanted to gain some professional skills before animating his most preferred work. After about two years, he felt ready to attempt animating JUNGLE EMPEROR.

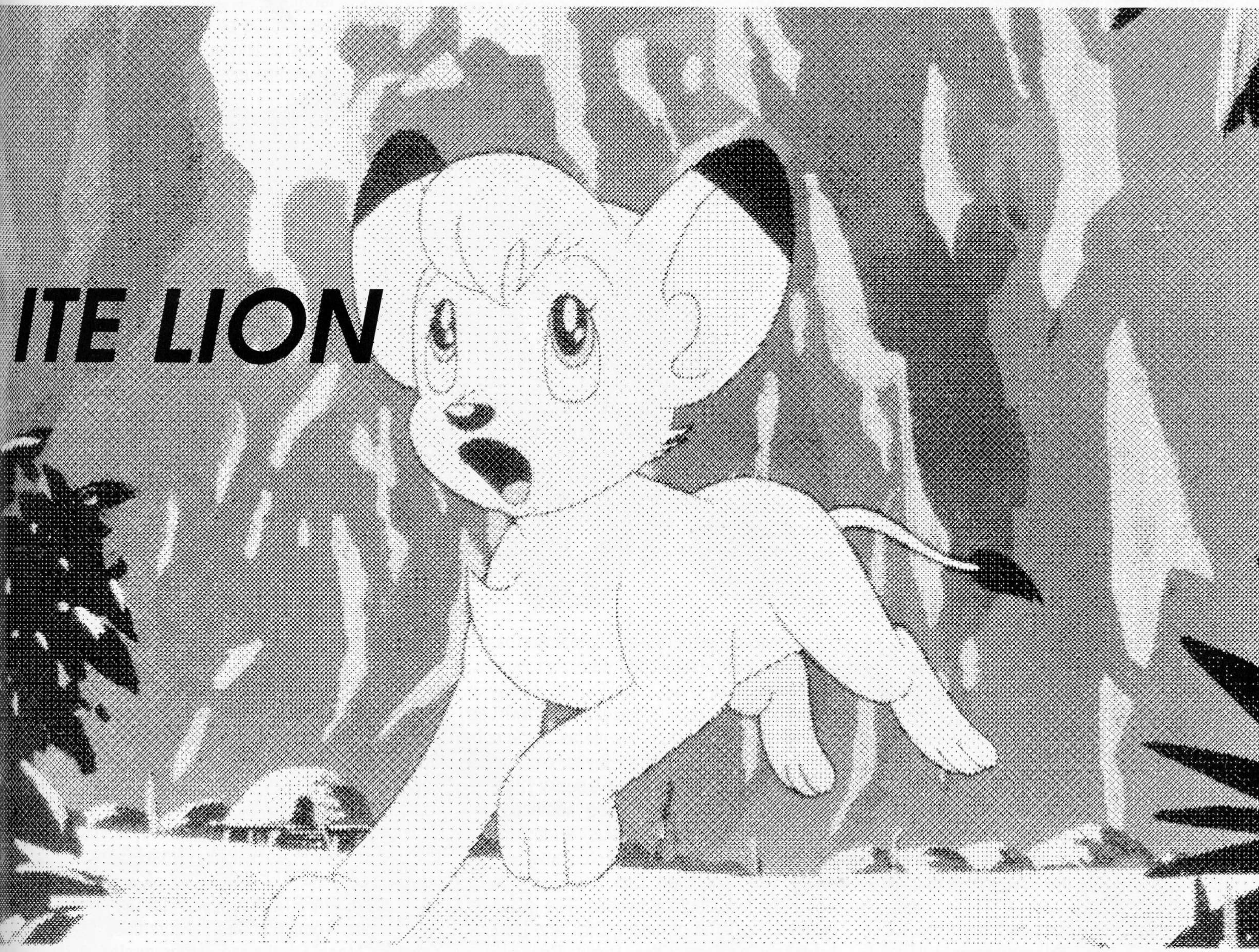
Mushi Productions early on had established a business relationship with America's National Broadcasting Company. NBC had bought the American rights to MIGHTY ATOM in 1963 and had created a special subsidiary, NBC Films, to syndicate it throughout the English-speaking world. NBC subcontracted American development work to Fred Ladd, and both NBC and Tezuka were generally pleased with Ladd's ASTROBOY.

Toward the end of 1964 NBC felt that it had enough episodes of ASTROBOY (104) to recycle them forever, and asked Tezuka if he had any new ideas. Tezuka suggested a serial about the adventures of an heroic lion, in the same production format as ASTROBOY—i.e. black and white. No, NBC replied: American TV will only accept color cartoons today. This flustered Tezuka, who replied that Mushi Productions had never worked with color. NBC sent a very flattering followup, which said in essence "Don't worry about color, we like your work so much that we will finance converting your studio to color production, just send us your proposal—but it has to be for color cartoons!" This practically amounted to a command performance for royalty, and Tezuka did not want to pass up the opportunity even though he was not sure what he was getting into.

Three or four more bits of correspondence were exchanged until Tezuka felt sure what NBC wanted, then he sent NBC a formal proposal. NBC did like the basic idea of JUNGLE EMPEROR; but there were a number of changes that NBC felt were essential to make the show acceptable for American TV. It was absolutely impossible that the star should die in the final episode! In fact, Leo shouldn't grow up at all. As a cub he was a character that children could identify with very well. As an adult with his own children, he would become a father-figure and audience identification would be lost. Therefore, NBC wanted JUNGLE EMPEROR to concentrate on Leo's boyhood adventures alone, which should be expanded to 52 episodes—a full year. On American TV, at that time, programs usually ran in full year packages.

This change emphasized another problem, though one for which NBC found an easy solution. In Tezuka's proposal, Leo spent his entire life fighting to establish his animal civilization. NBC didn't want a program that consisted primarily of long, bloody, realistic animal battles. Besides, making Leo a cub throughout would make it too improbable that he would be able to successfully fight full-grown lions, rhinos, elephants

ITE LION



and other large animals. NBC's solution was to make Leo into a super-lion, which would make him more popular with American children who were already used to TV-cartoon heroes being superheroes. This also would allow Leo to win all his battles easily and without the need for lots of blood, which would forestall complaints against too much violence. It would also allow more time for character development and humor, so the program would not be too heavy.

The final major change was that NBC did not want JUNGLE EMPEROR made as a serial but as a collection of independent stories. The reasons were that greater audiences (especially when dealing with children) can be won to a program where each episode is self-explanatory, rather than requiring viewers to be familiar with a continuing story; and that local TV stations (the customers for syndicated programming) object to the rigors of showing episodes in a specific order. Tezuka was asked not to structure any episodes as cliff-hangers, and to develop the general story in a broad manner so that it wouldn't matter if the episodes got shown out of order.

Tezuka protested over some of these changes, especially the decision to keep Leo as a cub. This destroyed the whole point of JUNGLE EMPEROR as the life story of his hero, and completely eliminated the dramatic climax atop Mt. Moon. NBC suggested a possible compromise: if Tezuka would make a 52-episode package the way NBC wanted it, then if it was popular enough NBC would consider a second 52-episode season in which Leo could become as adult and have children. If the first 52 episodes could build up a large enough audience for Leo, enough of it would probably continue watching his adventures as an adult.

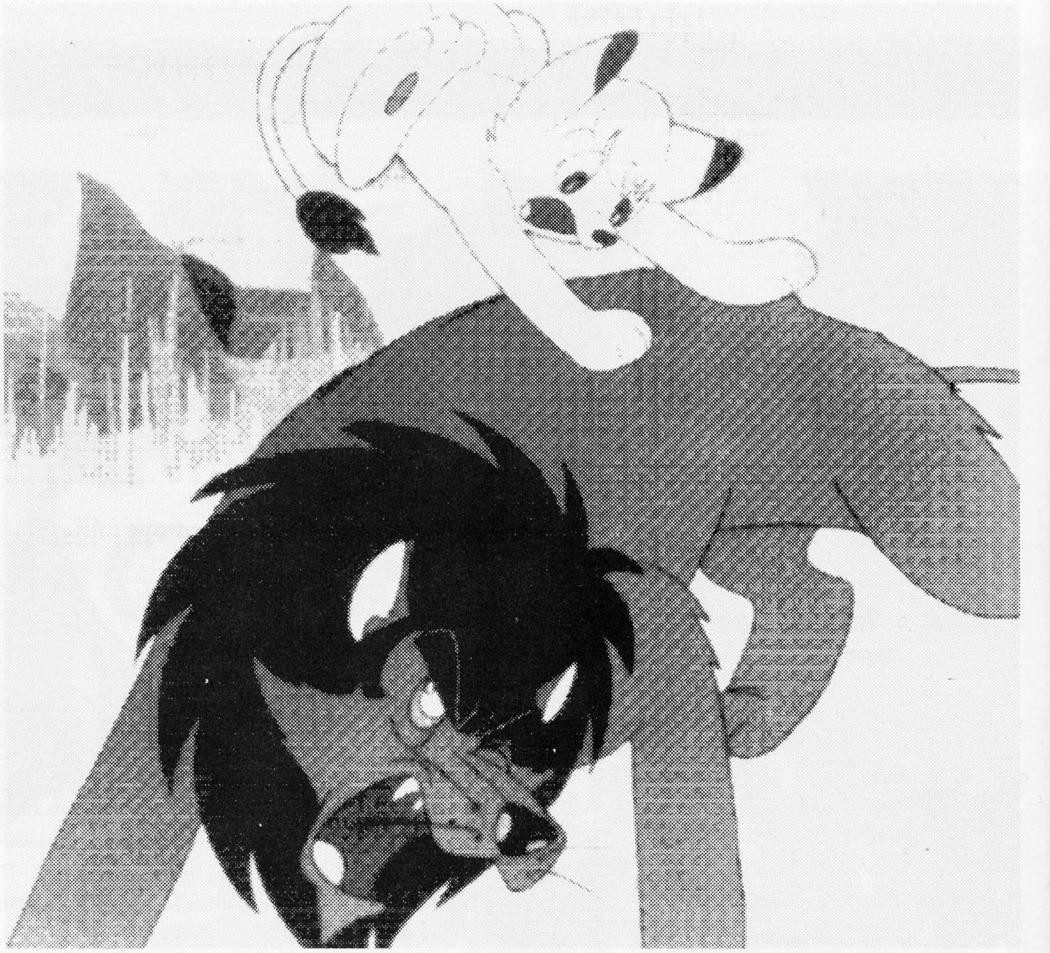
Tezuka accepted NBC's terms. However, the confusion and compromises were still not over. The program was about a year in production. Again, Fuji-TV underwrote the basic cost of making the series, while NBC's contribution allowed especially fancy frosting on the cake, as it were. Mushi Productions was so nervous about trying to animate in color that NBC flew Tezuka to Hollywood and arranged for him to tour the animation studios there, including Walt Disney Productions, to see how color animation was done. Tezuka, despite NBC's instructions, kept trying to make JUNGLE EMPEROR as close to his original concept as possible: the drama of one individual's struggle to create civilization out of chaos. This included a lot of fudging, through which Tezuka figuratively said, "I know I'm not supposed to show the good guys killing anybody, but a rock falling on the villain should be O.K.," or "it should be O.K. is the gun goes off by accident and I don't show the body," or "it's not a human, it's only one of the animals." NBC kept sending messages to Tokyo saying, "Keep it a light, happy children's show," while Tezuka replied "Yes, surely" and continued to supply episodes showing obvious death scenes.

Due to having pre-sold JUNGLE EMPEROR in Japan, Tezuka was obligated to have it ready for delivery by October 1965. To meet this schedule, Mushi Productions was divided into two production teams. Tezuka would give each team a story outline (or would approve a story outline submitted by someone else), and that team would produce it. Thus, two teams essentially produced 26 episodes apiece. Tezuka himself approved all the developments and tried to maintain an overall story consistency, so that even if the episodes were no longer connected in a tight chronological sequence, they at least did not contradict each other.

There were some inconsistencies despite this. One team might finish an episode plot outline, making whatever minor story adjustments seemed desirable, and begin to animate it immediately without checking to see whether the other team was making any minor adjustments of its own that might be contradictory. These were allowed to pass with the rationalization that, after all, they had been instructed not to worry about keeping the episodes in any sequence, so a minor inconsistency wouldn't be noticed by the average viewer. Whenever there was a need for a specific scene that would seem to date one episode in relation to the others, they tried to present it as a flashback so it was less obvious what the "now" was. In this way Tezuka got in some references to a sequence that NBC hadn't wanted at all: Leo's infancy as a pet in a human city, where he first met Ken-ichi and his uncle (Roger Ranger and Mr. Pompus) and came to appreciate the advantages of civilization.

In spite of all the obstacles,tthere is a subtle but distinct chronological progression to JUNGLE EMPEROR [see episode guide at the end of this article—ed.]. The farm is started; it has uncertain early days; it finally flourishes. Leo's authority as king of the jungle is at first shaky; he doubts his own ability, while other animals consider him an immature dreamer; gradually he becomes self-assured and all the animals accept his advice as wise and experienced. At first, Leo attends the animal school and plays with the other young animals as an equal; eventually he becomes an older-brother/teacher figure. In early episodes he is small and babyish, but at last he is man-sized and seems practically ready to grow a mane. Tezuka watched the progress of the 52 episodes and made sure they came as close to his JUNGLE EMPEROR as NBC would permit.

While Tezuka was watching the development of the story, director Eiichi Yamamoto (of SPACE BATTLESHIP YAMATO fame) was overseeing the visual development of JUNGLE EMPEROR. Tezuka still had the final say, but Yamamoto carried out the artistic direction based upon Tezuka's established comic-art images. Yamamoto was given considerable leeway in changing the characters. Tezuka had drawn Leo throughout this period of his life as a little cub, about the equivalent of an 8-year-old human child. Yamamoto built him into a husky 12 or 13-year-old, rapidly approaching adolescence. Yamamoto made Tot (Cassius) a much more sinister villain and gave Tot's old comedy-relief role to two henchmen, Dick and Bow (Tab & Tom), the two laughing hyenas. The idea was briefly considered of having Dick and Bow as lieutenants who would pass Bubu's/Boss Claw's orders down to a whole pack of hyena henchmen, but this idea was dropped. Most improtant of all, Yamamoto created the new supporting characters who would appear around Leo: Mandy (Dan'l), Koko (Pauley), Tomy (Bucky), the animal children (Dash, Dot & Dinky, Dodie Deer, etc) and others. The character development and the creation of a large cast whom the audience would come to love was entirely to Yamamoto's credit.



Yamamoto was also completely responsible for the look of the color animation. Although Tezuka was the guiding genius behind Mushi Productions, his own experience was as a black and white comicbook artist. Yamamoto, chosen by Tezuka as one of Mushi's founding animators, came from one of Japan's earliest animation studios, Otogi Productions, which had made Japan's first professional color cartoon in 1955. Yamamoto had directed two color cartoons for Otogi, including the feature-length A TRIP AROUND FAIRYLAND, before joining Mushi. Once the decision had been made that JUNGLE EMPEROR would be in color, Tezuka assigned Yamamoto to convert Mushi for color production. The fact that the colors in JUNGLE EMPEROR were so rich and varied, instead of being in the simple, flat hues associated with most TV animation, was due to Yamamoto's training as an artist for theatrical-quality animation and his determination to bring that quality to television.

JUNGLE EMPEROR's music was crafted by Isao Tomita. Tomita, one of the foremost pioneers of Moog Synthesizer programming, is today a world-famous name in New-Age/electronic music, but he started out working at Mushi Productions as an adapter of classical themes as background music for MIGHTY ATOM. For JUNGLE EMPEROR Tezuka gave Tomita the opportunity to compose a completely original score in the classical mode. The composer himself conducted the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra in recording it. The result is so brilliant that most people who are familiar with his career consider his JUNGLE EMPEROR to be far superior to anything he has done since.

Meanwhile in America, NBC had turned JUNGLE EMPEROR over to Fred Ladd, already familiar with Mushi Productions through his work on ASTROBOY from 1963. As it happened, Ladd himself did very little work on JUNGLE EMPEROR—or KIMBA THE WHITE LION, as we might as well start calling it now—other than to act as a liaison between NBC and Clifford Raymond Owens and his team. The actual professional chain of command was extremely informal. There was a single "magic address," 1600 Broadway in New York City, an old office building that contained a number of independent but interlocked businesses. There was Fred Ladd Productions, which contracted to produce English-language editions of foreign films. There was Titan Productions, a couple of sound studios for voice dubbing. There was Zavala-Riss Productions, who did film editing. It was their boast that a foreign film could be brought there and emerge as a complete American film without ever having to leave the building. Cliff Owens was already working on ASTROBOY when JUNGLE EMPEROR began arriving through Fred Ladd's office, so it was natural that the job would be turned over to him and his assistants. But, Ladd wanted him to do more than just the voices. Ladd was by now completely confident of his voice team's capabilities, so he turned the total production of the new program over to them while he went looking for new properties to develop. For business purposes Ladd was operating two companies simultaniously. Under the name of Delphi Productions, at the same address, he was already producing GIGANTOR for one of NBC's competitors [see article on GIGANTOR in issue #2—ed.].

Cliff Owens, Gil Mack and Billie Lou Watt were experienced radio voices who had played characters on many old radio adventures and children's programs and who had done many commercials. All three had worked on ASTROBOY along with Peter Fernandez (who left shortly before the end of ASTROBOY to form his own production company which produced SPEED RACER a couple of years later).

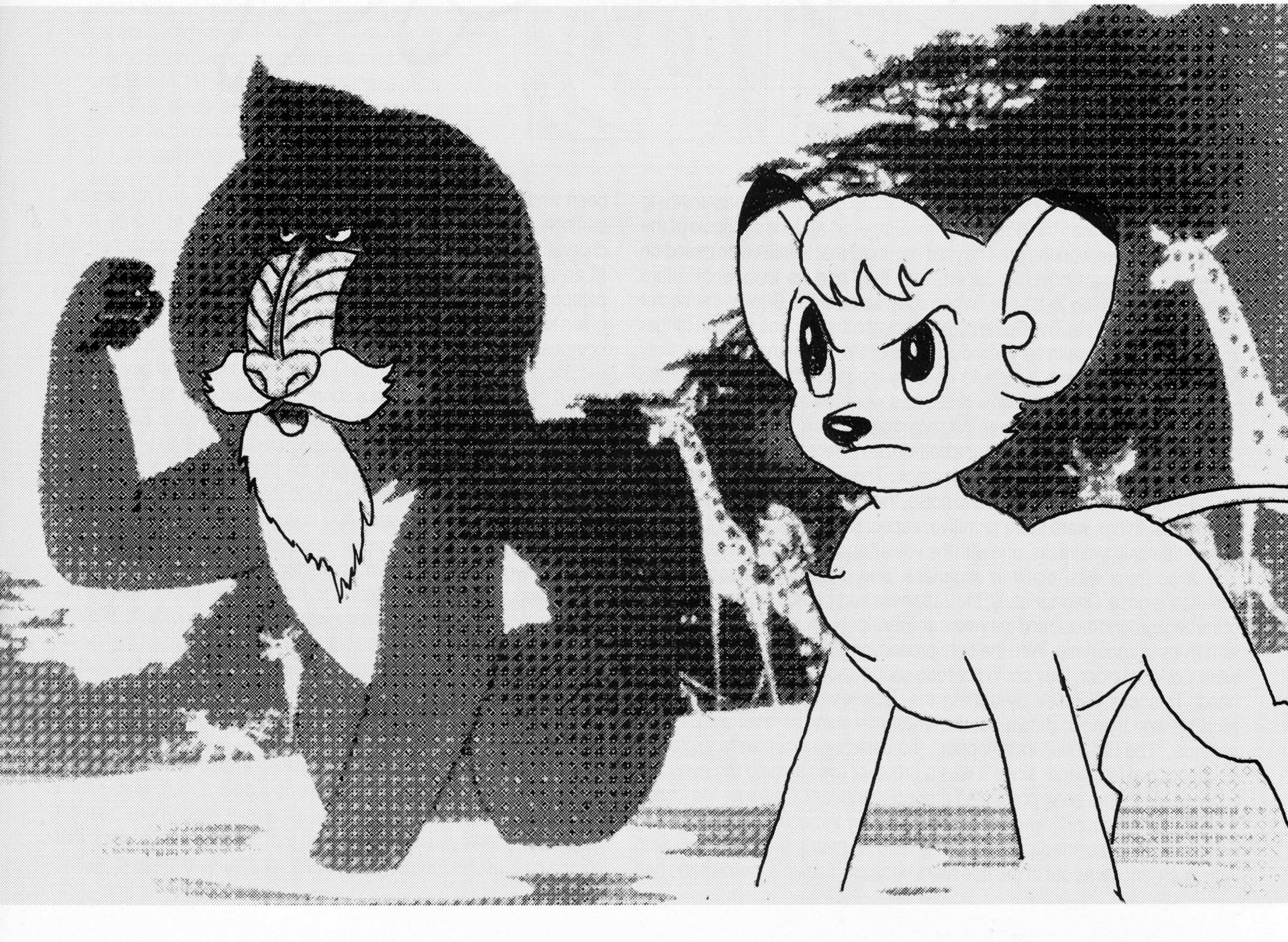
The group clearly remembers how KIMBA was cast. They had just recieved Mushi's "Plan of Jungle Emperor" and the pilot episode. The latter was practically useless because "Go, White Lion!" is so different from all the other episodes. It was understood that they were essentially working in the dark and that their plans might have to be considerably revised once they got a good look at the characters.

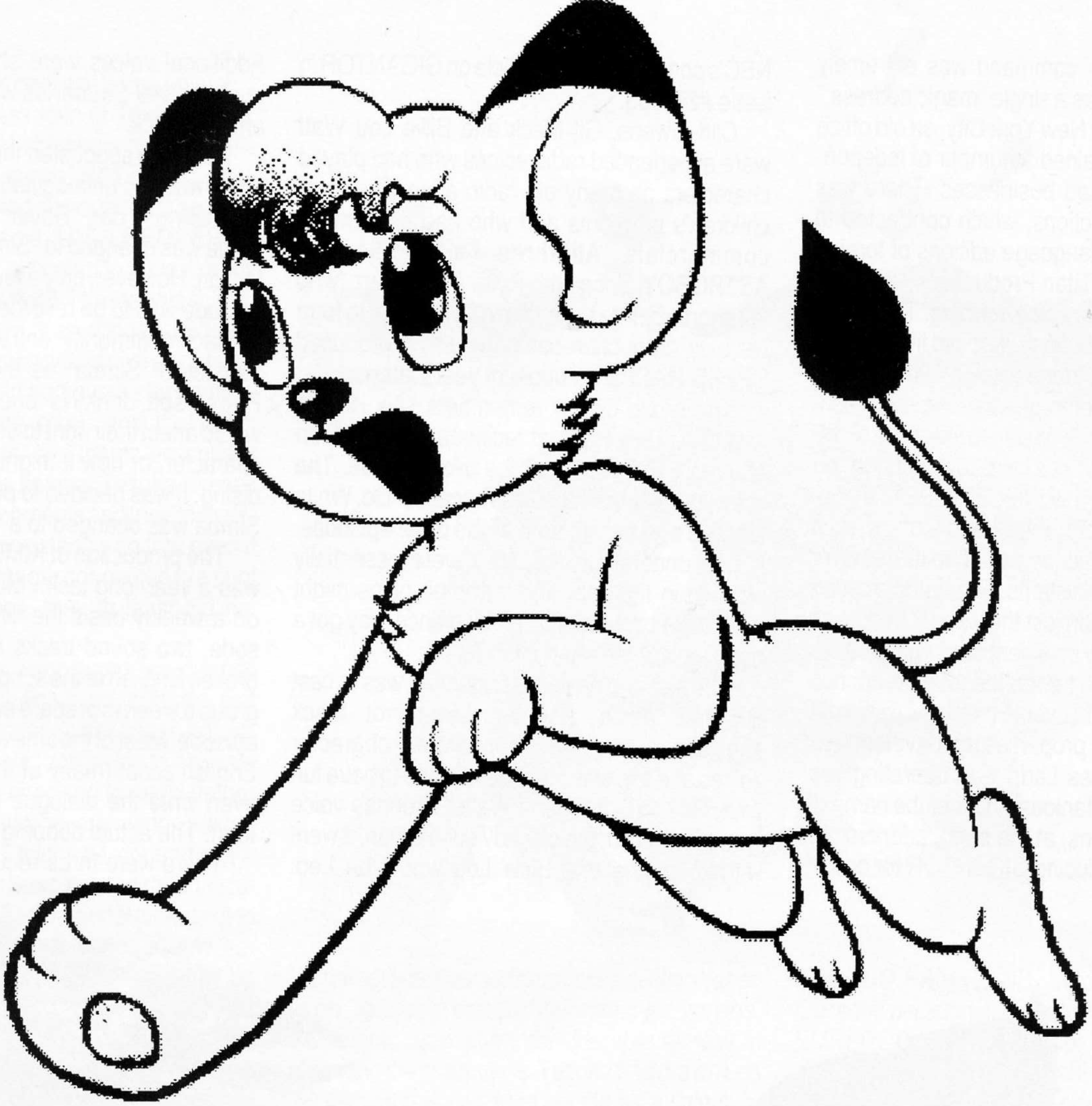
The first and easiest assignment was to cast Gil Mack as the hot-tempered parrot. Mack specialized in really exaggerated character voices and this was one he expected to have fun with. Ray thought that a Walter Brennan voice would do well for the old, advisor baboon. It went without saying that Billie Lou would be Leo. Additional voices were shared by Billie Lou's husband Hal Struder as well as Ray, Billie Lou and Gil Mack.

NBC had suggested through Fred Ladd that "Leo" was too unimaginative a name for a lion, like calling a dog "Rover" or "Fido." So, Leo's name was changed to "Simba" the Swahili word for lion. However, only a few days before the first episode was to be recorded, it was learned that a Black-community entrepeneur had already registered "Simba" as the name for a Black Power soft drink!No one was sure how this would affect their right to use Simba for a cartoon character, or how it might impact on merchandising. It was decided to play safe and the "S" in Simba was changed to a "K."

The production of KIMBA THE WHITE LION was a year-long task. Mushi Productions sent on a weekly basis the film for a half-hour episode, two sound tracks and a long outline in broken English of the script. It took the American group a week to prepare each English-language episode. Most of the time was taken in writing the English script (many of the voice actors would even write the dialogue for their own characters). The actual dubbing only took one day.

There were three recurring problems in the





production of KIMBA. One was that the American group never had anything more to work with than the "Plot of Jungle Emperor" and the synopsis of the episode they were working on. They did not know that KIMBA was based on a famous comic-art novel in Japan, and they had no idea what future episodes were going to be like. When they saw James Brawn, the secret agent in "The Wind In The Desert", they thought that he was Roger Ranger and since James Brawn very obviously dies at the end of that episode, they couldn't figure out how he could keep reappearing in future episodes. Fortunately, they realized in time that these were two separate characters.

The second problem was with the Japanese sound tracks. Today a movie or TV program is made with about a half-dozen different tracks, each with a different portion of the overall audio track. There are the voice track, the sound effects track, the background noise, the music and so forth. But, in the mid-1960s, things were more primitive, especially in Japan. Mushi Productions made only two tracks, one with the voices and one with everything else. The voice track was totally in Japanese, and disgarded as soon as the Americans got it. Unfortunately, the Japanese had treated the songs as part of the background music and they were an inextricable part of the soundtrack—with lyrics in Japanese. With the tight production schedule and budget they were working under, they could not redo songs and had to use what was on hand. This was handled by turning the Japanese tape down as low as possible and trying to drown out the lyrics with some of their own. In one episode, "The Gigantic Grasshopper", the Japanese lyrics were explained as being "owl language" since it was a group of owls singing the song.

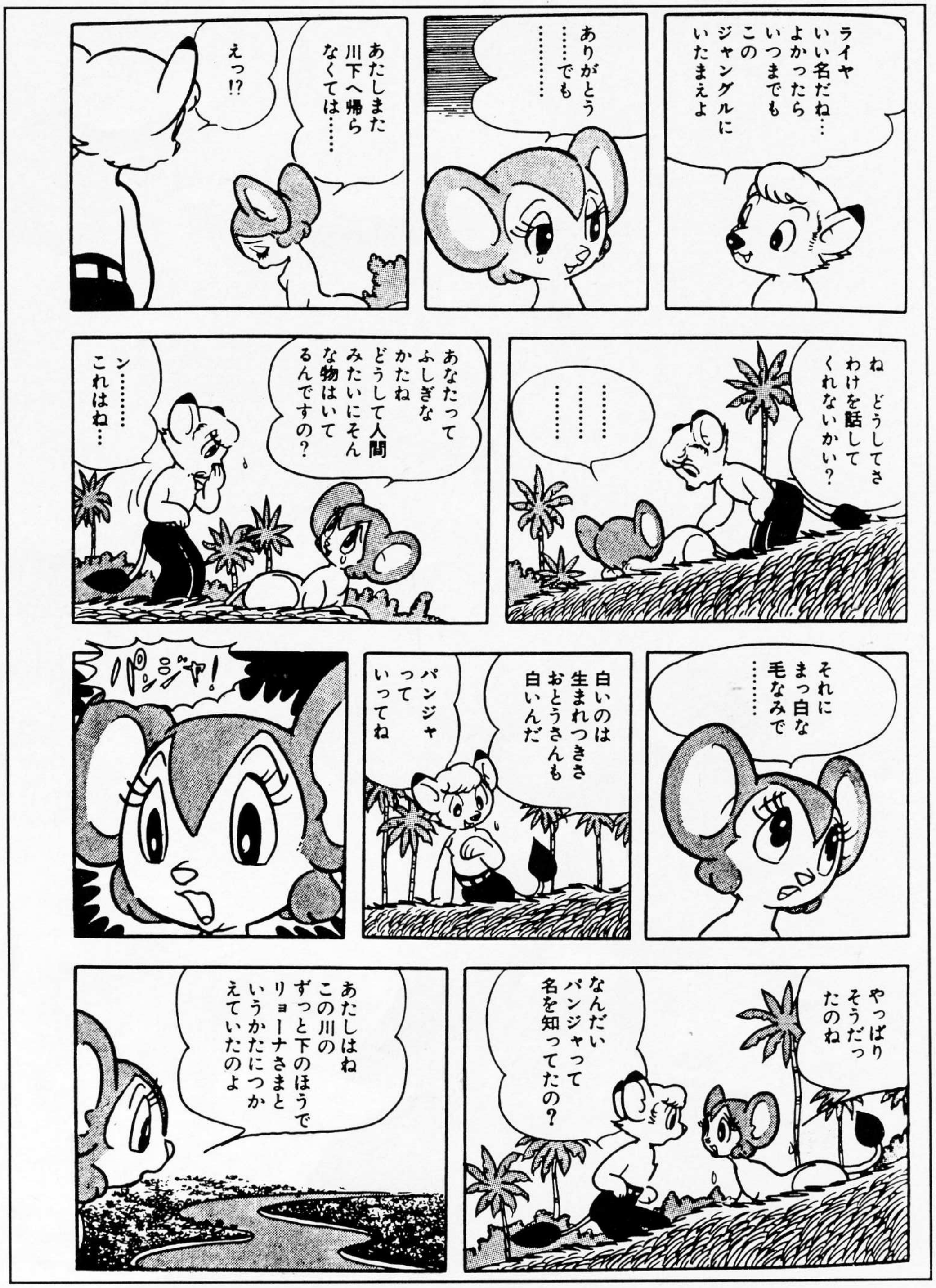
Kimba's theme song presented a special problem. This was too important to turn the sound low on and fake their way through. A new recording would have to be made. Even using Isao Tomita's original score with American lyrics was out of the question, because Tomita's theme song had been written for a symphony orchestra, a full choir and an operatic baritone as soloist. The idea of spending that kind of money for a children's TV theme song dazed NBC. Kimba's theme was farmed out to an entertainment-industry songwriting group that specialized in composing ditties for TV commercials and the like. All that they were given to work with was a film clip of the opening credits, to which they composed a catchy tune whose rhythm matched the galloping tempo of Kimba's run cycle through the jungle. It was light and gay and if it wasn't as beautiful as Tomita's score, it also avoided the ponderous awsomeness that Tezuka associated with his JUNGLE EMPEROR saga and which NBC had been trying desperately to avoid. NBC could rightfully feel perfectly satisfied with the theme song that they got.

The final recurring problem was with the violence in the Japanese program, which the Ladd team had to disguise as much as possible. The American audiences never realized how much violence was toned down in Kimba's own character. In the Japanese version, Kimba was constantly struggling to maintain his ideals against his own carnivorous instincts. There were numerous incidents when it was much more obvious in the dialogue than in the action that he on the verge of totally losing control of himself. In "Nightmare Narcissus" when Roger Ranger tries to stop Kimba from attacking Dr. Mandel Spees after Kimba realizes that Spees is responsible for the jungle's peril, Kimba says "Don't try to stop me Ranger, `cause he endangered the animals with that horrible plant just for the sake of an experiment! I'm going to see to it that he doesn't do it again!" But, what Kimba actually said to Roger in the original Japanese version was "Get out of my way unless you want to get hurt too!" When it was obvious that Kimba had lost his temper, they would substitute some much milder statement and then further downplay it by having Dan'l or someone else say, "Why Kimba, that's not like you!"

JUNGLE EMPEROR went on the air in Japan in October 1965. The episodes were usually completed less than a week before they were broadcast. In America, KIMBA began production in November 1965, but NBC waited until all 52 episodes were nearing completion before promoting it for syndicated sales. It appeared first on Los Angeles' KHJ-TV in September 1966 and in other cities in late 1966 and early 1967.

KIMBA THE WHITE LION was a hit in America and Japan alike—so much so that Osamu Tezuka was encouraged to take a gamble. NBC had said that if the program were a success, they would consider buying a sequel in which Leo could be shown as an adult. Tezuka took the profit that he was making and immediately began working on this sequel, not submitting it to NBC so they would not have the opportunity to tamper with his work again. NBC first found out about it when Tezuka presented it to them as a fait accompli: Here it is, how do you like it?

This sequel, titled FOWARD LEO!, was nominally set about five years after the events in the original series. Leo/Kimba was now a full adult and married to Kitty. In episode #5 their children were born; twins named Runè and Rukyo. (The names are Japanese puns on "Go to sleep" and "wake up." Tezuka had an incredible penchant for cute names). As the series progressed Runè, originally a creampuff next to the tomboyish Rukyo, developed a fighting spirit and became comparable to the Americanized Kimba. The final episode had Runè saving Kimba's life. It closed with a symbolic scene indicating that Kimba was now ready to settle into peaceful retirement with Kitty, leaving Runè to carry on the dynasty of the white lions.

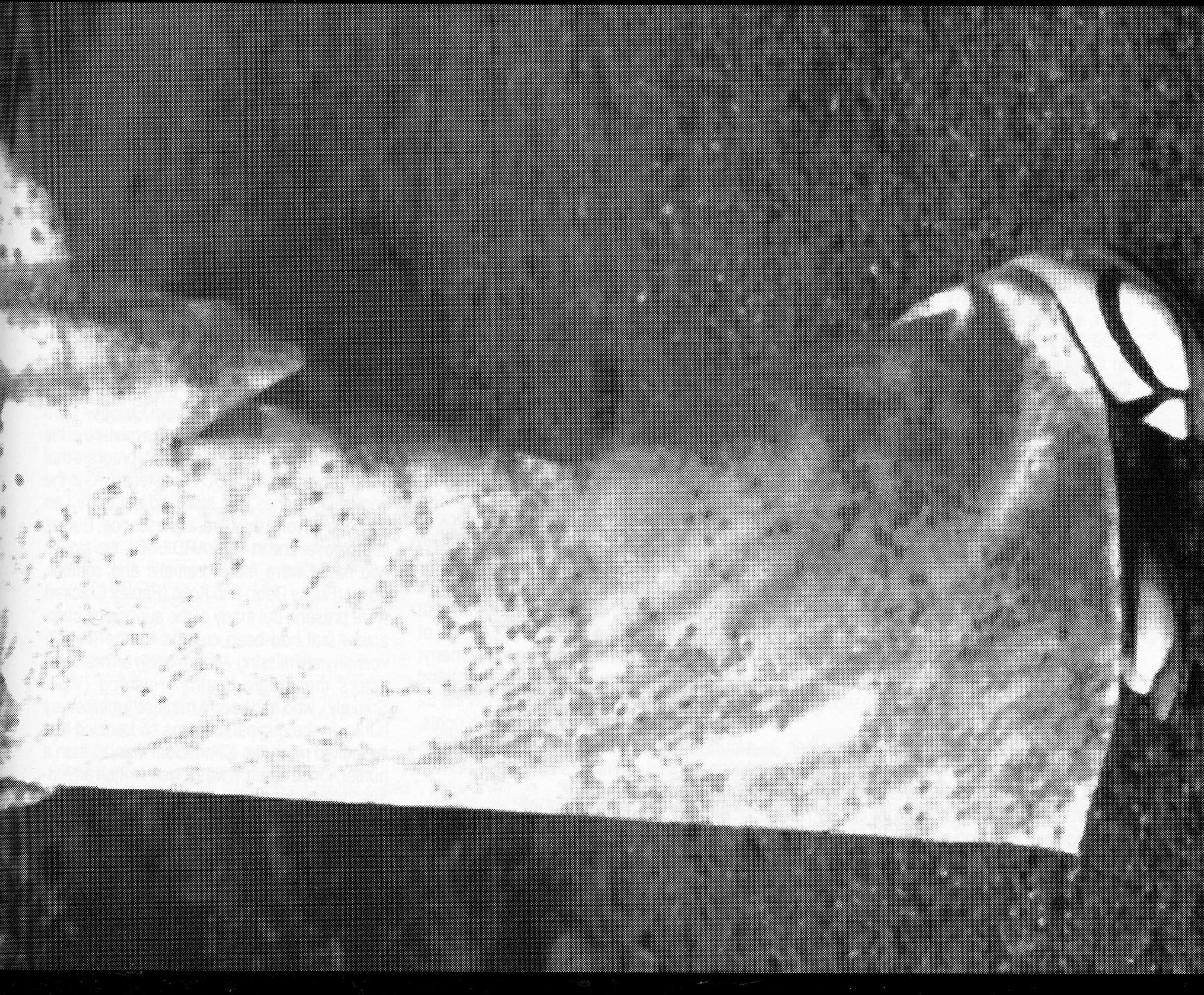

ライヤ いい名だね… よかったら いつまでも この ジャングルに いたまえよ
ありがとう ……でも ………
あたしまた 川下へ帰ら なくては……
えっ!?
ね どうしてさ わけを話して くれないかい?
……… ……… ………
あなたって ふしぎな かたね どうして人間 みたいにそん な物はいて るんですの?
ン……… これはね…
それに まっ白な 毛なみで ……
白いのは 生まれつきさ おとうさんも 白いんだ
パンジャ って いってね
パンジャ!
やっぱり そうだっ たのね
なんだい パンジャって 名を知ってたの?
あたしはね この川の ずっと下のほうで リョーナさまと いうかたにつか えていたのよ

That, at least, was how Tezuka viewed the sequel. What NBC saw was not KIMBA five years later, but Tezuka's original JUNGLE EMPEROR. Everything that Kimba had stood for had been lost. The jungle kingdom that had finally become a success in KIMBA was reduced to a small crowd of animals, mostly herbivores, cowering under Leo's personal protection. Where Kimba had been able to beat any animal in the jungle and even leap into the air and bring down helicopters, the adult Leo had to spend almost half an episode to battle an ordinary lion or a few wolves—and he might lose! He didn't dare go against an elephant or other major animal. Pauley Cracker appeared for less than one minute altogether in the 26 episodes; Dan'l Baboon was practically senile and there was no sight of any of Kimba's other old friends or of any of the animal children grown up. Practically every sympathetic character who appeared in FOWARD LEO! died in a lengthy tear-jerker climax. Leo was regularly involved in an endless procession of those bloody, realistic animal battles which NBC had specifically told Tezuka the previous year that they did not want. It was no sale.

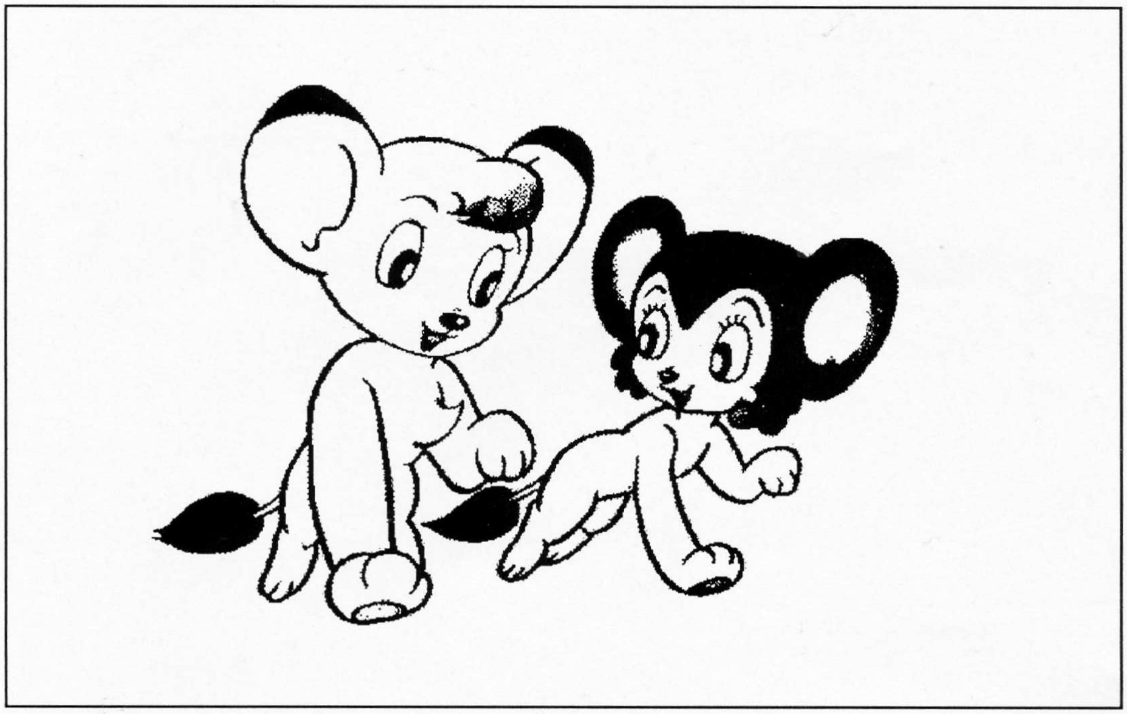
The 26-episode FOWARD LEO! was broadcast in Japan immediately following the last episode of JUNGLE EMPEROR. It was popular, but not as popular as the Japanese-language version of the NBC-dictated JUNGLE EMPEROR itself had been, showing that possibly NBC's advice had been sound regarding Japanese viewers as well.

What might KIMBA have been like if it had been made the way that Tezuka had wanted? FOWARD LEO! provides the answer. It would have been dramatic, tense and emotionally

MARKALITE MAIDEN — Fall 1991



YURIKO HOSHI circa 1964



exhausting. It would have featured Kimba as a loner, without the warm companionship of a close-knit supporting cast. It would have been an intriguing program, certainly, but not one that the viewer could relax with.

NBC had felt that in KIMBA THE WHITE LION, they had a 52 episode series that could be sold for syndicated broadcasting indefinitely. For the rest of the 1960s this worked quite well. But, problems developed at the beginning of the 1970s.

A major problem was the federal government's anti-trust directive forbidding television companies from both broadcasting and syndicating programs to other broadcasters. NBC had to close its NBC Films subsidiary. In 1971, KIMBA was sold as part of a package deal along with all of NBC's other syndicated programming to National Telefilm Associates in Los Angeles.

NTA continued its syndication for another couple of years, but by the mid-1970s, KIMBA began falling victim to the increasing restrictions on television programming for children. It had originally won commendations from parental and educational groups for its lessons in building strength in character; but now it began to draw criticism for showing violence (no matter the reason). Black pressure groups objected to the way that Blacks always appeared in KIMBA as grass-hut-dwelling savages and that the only civilized humans in Africa were white hunters and tourists. Also, the original 16mm prints started to wear out, and with sales falling, it didn't seem worth the expense to make new prints. KIMBA THE WHITE LION gradually faded away.

The end came in 1978. NBC had only secured KIMBA for a dozen years, until September 30, 1978, so the rights that NTA had bought from NBC expired on that date. These rights reverted to Japan. But, unnoticed by most Americans, Mushi Productions had gotten into financial difficulties in the early 1970s, going bankrupt in 1973, its assets divided among a number of creditors.

NTA's records show that they held KIMBA in storage from October 1978 until May 8, 1979, when they were instructed by NBC, relaying directions from Japan, to ship all remaining 16mm prints, the original film negatives and other production materials back to New York City. An executive confirmed in March 1991 that the KIMBA production materials are still being held in storage there. But, so far, no prospective new purchaser has felt that KIMBA was worth the expense and trouble of sorting out the different claims to the property: one company owns the Kimba trademarked name, another owns the rights to show the 52 episodes on TV, a third owns the video rights, a fourth owns the comicbook rights, a fifth owns the toy rights... until this is settled, KIMBA will remain in limbo.

But, this is not the end of the story. KIMBA was gone, but in 1984 the Christian Broadcasting Network brought Tezuka's FOWARD LEO! to American TV syndication under the title of LEO THE LION. It was so cheaply produced that it did not have any credits, not even a main title card. The openning credits animation was shown without any printing while a simple theme song was sung.

Unlike KIMBA, which had been extensively revised to tailor it to American tastes, LEO was an extremely accurate translation of the Japanese script. The original names of the characters were used, such as Leo (Kimba) and Liya (Kitty). This may have been done out of consideration for Tezuka's wishes or to avoid a copyright conflict with the KIMBA property. LEO did acknowledge the Kimba name by treating it as a juvenile nickname which Leo had discarded when he became an adult. For example, in the episode "The Poacher", Leo addresses an elderly elephant, "Do you remember little Kimba? That's what they used to call me."

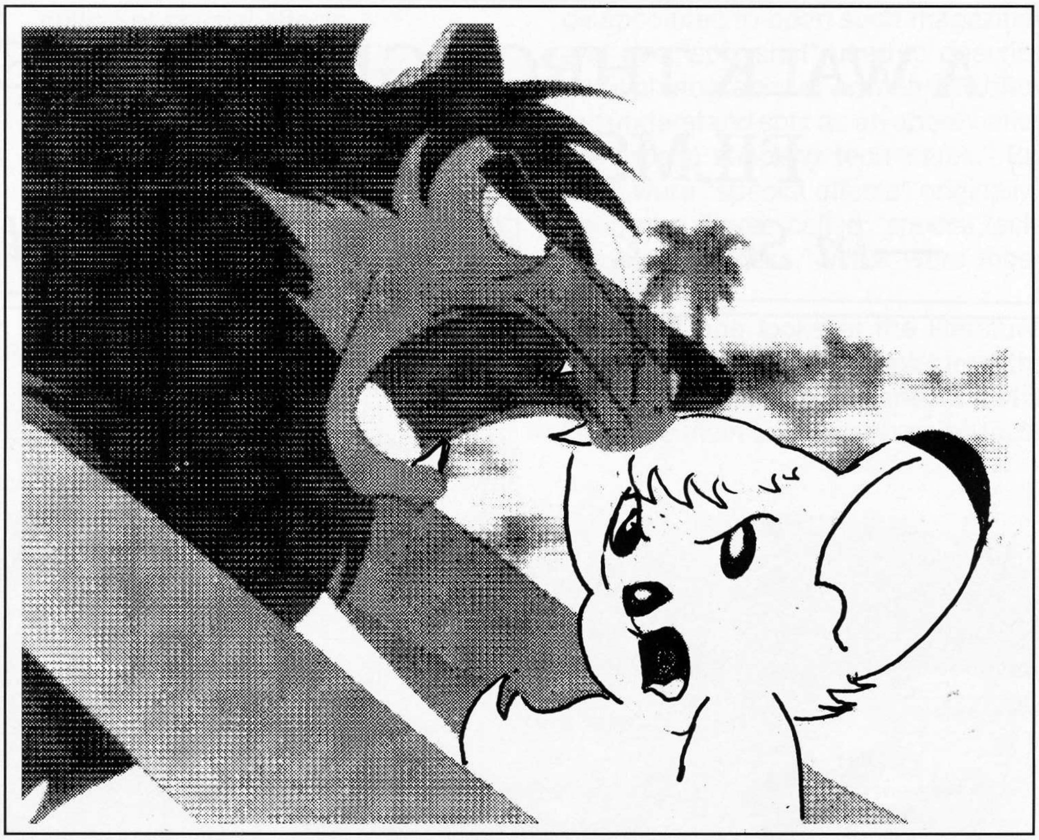
The faithfulness to Tezuka's original conception may have been admirable, but it left LEO THE LION with all the problems that had already been built into FOWARD LEO! Meanwhile in Japan, after Osamu Tezuka had lost control of Mushi Productions, he started a new studio, Tezuka Productions. He had lost the rights to the MIGHTY ATOM and JUNGLE EMPEROR programs that Mushi had produced, but he retained the rights to his characters including the right to feature them in new programs. Tezuka made a new, color MIGHTY ATOM series in 1980-81, but he did not start on a new JUNGLE EMPEROR series until 1988, just before his death. Osamu Tezuka died of stomach cancer on February 9, 1989, but his staff at Tezuka Productions completed it according to his design.

The new JUNGLE EMPEROR ran for 50 episodes on Japanese TV, from October 1989 through September 1990. It was a mixture of his original comic-art novel and the TV program that Tezuka had made at NBC's insistence. As in the original TV series, the story did not carry Leo and Liya beyond their pre-adolescence. But, as in the novel and in FOWARD LEO!, the stories and mood were more dramatic and somber. Tomy (Bucky Deer) and Koko (Pauley Cracker) were present, but many of the supporting characters that had been created for the first TV version were missing. Many friendly animal characters met tragic deaths. Hamegg (Viper Snakely), who had been a ruthlessly mercenary hunter in the original, became so frenzied that he looked more like a homicidal maniac than a hunter. Once again, it was a well-written adventure drama, but without the American touch it was not another KIMBA.

This is how KIMBA THE WHITE LION came to be. It was created by a Japanese producer who didn't get to do the program he'd wanted to make, for an American TV distributor that didn't get the program it had expected to receive. It was adapted for American TV by a production team who often weren't sure of what they were doing. Yet what resulted was a program that was imaginative, intelligent, exciting, humorous and charming.

Will KIMBA THE WHITE LION ever be seen again? It's reassuring to know that the film negatives are still being safeguarded. If the confusion over who controls the rights can be cleared up, today's home video market is waiting!•

Due to NBC's insistence that KIMBA should consist of seperate episodes that could be shown in any order, the episode numbers were assigned without regard to story continuity. Following is a list of the intended chronological order of the series, compiled by Robin Leyden and Wendell Washer after a thorough analysis of all 52 episodes, and after lengthy talks with Osamu Tezuka, Ray Owens and Billie Lou Watt. NBC's official episode numbers follow at the end.



1. GO, WHITE LION! The death of Caesar; Kimba's birth; death of Snowene. (1)
2. THE WIND IN THE DESERT. Kimba returns to the jungle; meets Dan'l and other friends; learns to fight when necessary. (8)
3. BATTLE AT DEAD RIVER. Kimba meets Kitty; decisively beats Boss Claw as King of the jungle. (10)
4. VOLCANO ISLAND. Kimba meets Boss Rhino; the animal school is started; Kimba as a young student. (22)
5. JUNGLE THIEF. The farm is started; Henrietta Riverhog is introduced. (2)
6. THE INSECT INVASION. The farm begins to grow; grasshoppers are used as food for the carnivores (9)
7. GREAT CAESAR'S GHOST. Kimba is a young, insecure leader; Samson Buffalo challenges his authority. (4)
8. DANGEROUS JOURNEY. Pop Wooly and the Stoney Mountain Fever epidemic. (3)
9. A HUMAN FRIEND. Roger Ranger comes to the jungle and teaches the animals to talk. (14)
10. THE TROUBLEMAKER. Benny Ostrich; Kimba is still a young student at the animal school. (26)
11. THE BALLOON THAT BLOWS UP. The runaway balloon; Kimba is a playmate to Dash, Dot and Dinky. (47)
12. JOURNEY INTO TIME. King Sprecklerex & the Lion Convention; Kimba and Kitty are good friends; history of the white lions. (5)
13. RESAURANT TROUBLE. Starting the restaurant; still conservative opposition to Kimba's new ideas. (6)
14. RUNNING WILD. The antelope stampede; saving the farm. (24)
15. THE COBWEB CAPER. The giant spider. (50)
16. A FRIEND IN DEED. Kelly Funt gives trouble; Kimba tells how he first met Roger Ranger. (38)
17. THE BAD BABOON. Big-O attacks; Kimba is big enough to save Dan'l. (7)
18. THE TRAPPERS. Viper Snakely returns; Roger is respected by the animals; Kimba's rule is well established (18)
19. THE HUNTING GROUND. Introduction of Tonga and the hunter's preserve; intro of Mt. Moon and the mammoth. (19)
20. DIAMONDS IN THE GRUFF. Daimonds and alligators; Roger helps Kimba to savetthe youngsters. (34)
21. TOO MANY ELEPHANTS. Introduction of Mr. Pompus; the first attempt to get Roger to leave the jungle. (30)
22. CATCH 'EM IF YOU CAN. Tonga's hunting contest against Kimba. (52)
23. THE NIGHTMARE NARCISSUS. Kimba is big enough to start giving orders to Roger. (31)
24. THE GIGANTIC GRASSHOPPER. Kimba is forced to kill; he learns a leader must sometimes make unpleasant decisions. (27)
25. THE REVOLTING DEVELOPMENT. A meat substitute is found; the problem of food for the carnivores is solved. 36)
26. THE RUNAWAY. Gargoyle G. Warthog; the Animal of the Year Award. (35)
27. SUCH SWEET SORROW. Tonga's end; the second appearance of the mammoth; Roger leaves the jungle. (33)
28. THE WILD WILDCAT. Introduction of Wiley Wildcat. (15)
29. THE RETRUN OF FANCY PRANCY. Kimba is still playing with the youngsters as an equal. (51)
30. THE MYSTERY OF THE DESERTED VILLAGE. Introduction of Leona; Claw tries to dethrone Kimba through a ruse. (28)
31. SOLDIER OF FORTUNE. Floppo the seal. (40)
32. LEGEND OF HIPPO VALLEY. Another Claw ruse; Boss Hippo. (20)
33. ADVENTURE IN THE CITY. Kitty and Uncle Sprecklerex; Scott Free; Mr. Trailer. (32)
34. CHAMELEON WHO CRIED WOLF. Newton the liar. (12)
35. SILVERTAIL THE RENEGADE. Kimba's jungle has become a safe refuge from human hunters. (37)
36. FAIR GAME. Speedy Cheetah's grandpa Quasimoto; flashback showing Kimba with Roger Ranger and Mr. Pompus in Paris. (46)
37. JUNGLE FUN. Starting the amusement park; Claw's last takeover attempt. (43)
38. THE PRETENDERS. Finishing the amusement park. (44)
39. THE SUN TREE. Uncle Scratch Baboon and Muffy. (49)
40. TWO HEARTS AND TWO MINDS. Pauley and Pauline Parrott; Kimba gets strong feelings for Kitty. (39)
41. MONSTER OF THE MOUNTAIN. Mama and Teddy Bear; Kimba is called upon for aid outside his kingdom. (48)
42. MONSTER OF PETRIFIED VALLEY. Colosso, the Brodo bird. (45)
43. THE DAY THE SUN WENT OUT. Leona and the ancestral white lion hides. (41)
44. THE RED MENACE. The forest fire; Peewee Elephant; Kelly Funt finally becomes a friend. (42)
45. JUNGLE JUSTICE. Clunker Hippo's trial. (29)
46. GYPSY'S PURPLE POTION. Gypsy Owl; the Tower of Honor; Claw's last appearance. (13)
47. SCRAMBLED EGGS. Spring cleaning; Kimba directs the animal youngsters as their superior. (11)
48. THE MAGIC SERPENT. Rancid Reekybird; Puffy Adder and the evil eye. (21)
49. THE FLYING TIGER. Clutch Eagle; Professor Madcap and the Flier. (23)
50. CITY OF GOLD. Goldopolis; Grandaddy Turtle; the last appearance of Tom and Tab. (16)
51. THE LAST POACHER. Seymour Hart; Kimba is a brawny adolescent working on human conservationists. (17)
52. DESTROYERS FROM THE DESERT. The three destroyers; the final fadeout showing of Kimba's kingdom firmly established. (25)

KIMBA THE WHITE LION aka JUNGLE EMPEROR/KING OF THE JUNGLE (JANGURU TAITEI). Created by Osamu Tezuka. Produced by Mushi Productions and NBC Films, Inc. Character Design and Animation Direction: Eiichi Yamamoto. Music: Isao Tomita. All 52 episodes are currently available in Japanese Laserdisc box set.

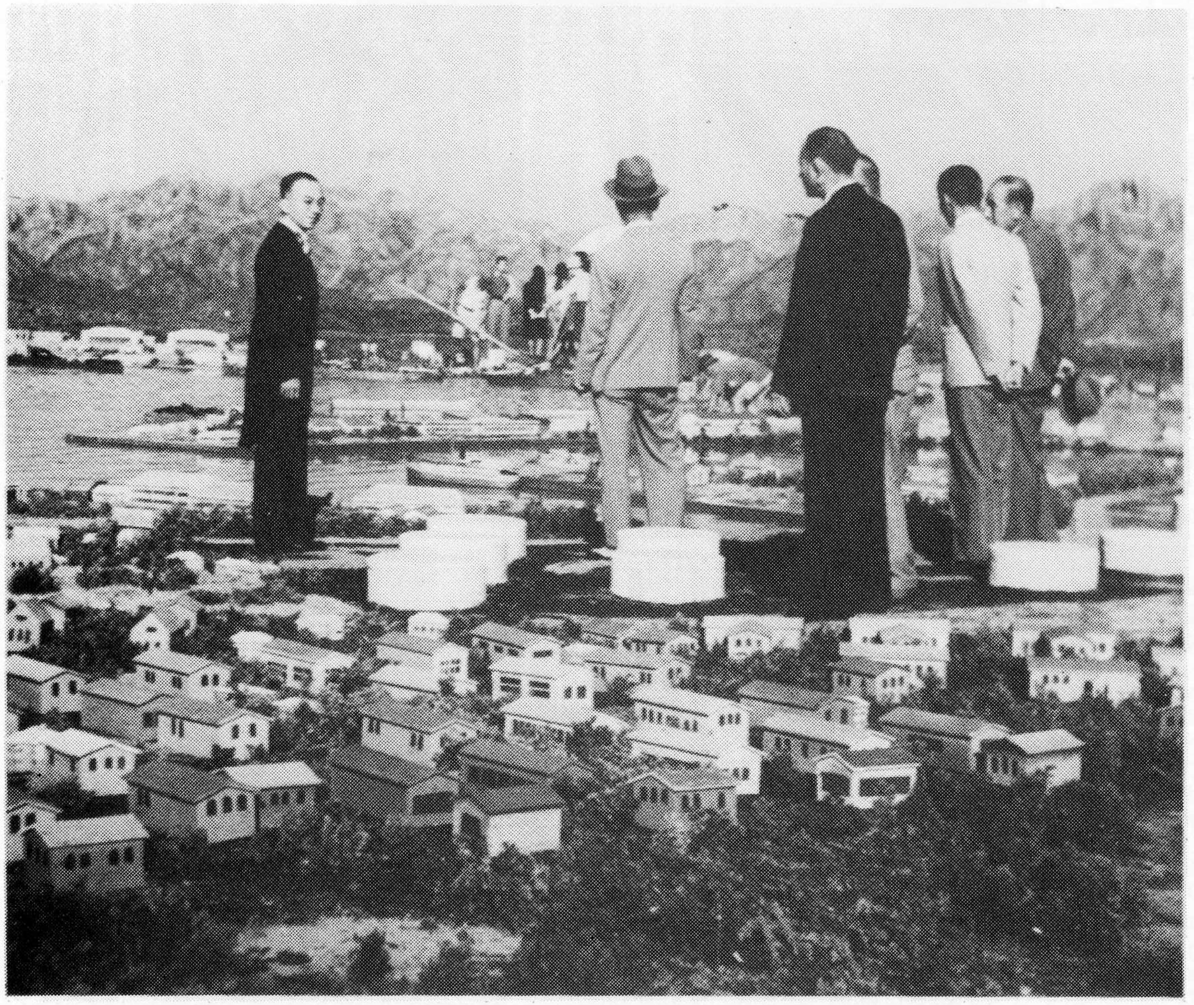
A WALK THROUGH MONSTER FILMS OF THE PAST

—In Search of Toho Special Effects

~Part 1~

Hiroshi Takeuchi

(The following is the first in a series of articles on Toho Studios and the development of its special effects department. The article is by Hiroshi Takeuchi—reknown fan and archievist; Mr. Takeuchi has written for several publications and is well-known by many Japanese filmmakers. This article is reprinted, with some revisions, from *Uchusen magazine.*)



On the set of THE WAR AT SEA FROM HAWAII TO MALAYA (1942)—at the time, it was a very sensational miniature reproduction of Peal Harbour. Here, Takeo Ohashi, the then president of Toho Studios, giving a tour of the set to Prince Hatohiko Asakanomiya (to the left.)

1. A Roundabout Prelude

Recently, TV stations in Japan have been running 24 hours, and it's enjoyable to see Western movies uncut and with subtitles. Once again I was attracted to Marilyn Monroe's charm in THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH. I was enchanted with the first scene in which she appears with a fan in her left hand and a shopping bag in her right. I prefer this to the famous scene in which her skirt is blown upward by the wind from the subway.

It's strange that one might remember one scene or cut, even if it isn't that important, in more detail than one's general impression of the whole movie. When I was in elementary school, one scene of a television film impressed me strongly. However, I couldn't remember the name of the film or the director. That scene showed a poor little girl who let hot steaming rice fall to the dirty mud. I remembered feeling very sad thinking about that poor girl.

I unexpectedly happened to see this film again on TV recently. When that scene came on I rushed to look in the newspaper and finally found out that it was NIGORIE, directed by Tadashi Imai. The original novel was written by Ichiyo Higuchi (1953, Shinseiki Productions-Bungakuza, released by Shochiku). That scene was still vivid and fresh in my mind after 20 years.

Speaking about rice, I also had a strong impression from one scene of Akira Kurosawa's THE SEVEN SAMURAI. In that scene Bokuzen Hidari was so surprised to learn that some rice was stolen that he couldn't move. His reaction in that scene really stuck in my mind.

Now let's return to the main story, to investigate as much as possible the history and achievements of Toho's special effects. Naturally, I have to talk about the director Eiji Tsuburaya. Currently, with the increased popularity of VCRs, we are lucky to be able to see many of Tsuburaya's pre-war works. First of all, in order to explain his screen achievements, I have to give a basic outline of special effects.

2. From Tricks To Special Techniques To Special Effects

Starting with the second monster boom of 1971, the term "special effects" is often found in youth magazines. [The first monster boom occured in 1966. This was the year that nearly every major film studio released a "Kaiju Eiga" film. The second monster boom in 1971 involved an onslaught of highly influential television series—Ed.] I was disappointed to open such magazines and see "spfx shot" used to describe nude photographs of women. We often misunderstand spfx as an abbreviation of "special shooting techniques." But what were "special effects" originally? Long ago it was called "special techniques," or "tricks." What were these tricks?

If one looks at the literature, during the age of "motion pictures" the word "tricks" was used. Here is a partial list of the main books concerning tricks

MOYURU OZORA (1942)—these scenes were shot in the field. (left); KAIGUN BAKUGEKITAI (1942). Some of the miniatures—these were the most realistic of the time.(photos from *Shin Eiga*, July 1943)

A tense moment from KAIGUN BAKUGEKITAI—the story of Japan's naval bombers during WW2.

from the *Nippon Eiga Shoshi* (Eiga Hyoronsha, 1937), by Takemi Tamaguchi.

1) "Wagahai wa Film de aru" (I Am A Film), *Katsudo Shashin Zasshi Henshukyoku*, April 20, 1918. *Wagahai no Mudabanashi* and others.

2) *Katsudo Shashin no Hanashi* (The Story of Motion Pictures), Mikihito Yamane, Toyo Publishers, March 28, 1923, "About tricks."

3) *Eiga Oyobi Eiga Geki*, Shin Terakawa, Osaka Mainichi Newspaper, May 20, 1926, 3rd chapter on "Tricks and methods."

4) *Eiga Seisakuho*, Norimasa Kiyama, Mitsuo Harada, Nippon Kyozai Eiga Co., June 1, 1933, 6th chapter on "Film Tricks."

5) "Torikku Shashin no Tsukurikata" (How To Do Trick Shots), Yoshiroku Okubo, Norimasa Kiyama, *Tokyo Asahi Newspaper*, October 25, 1936, "Motion Picture Tricks."

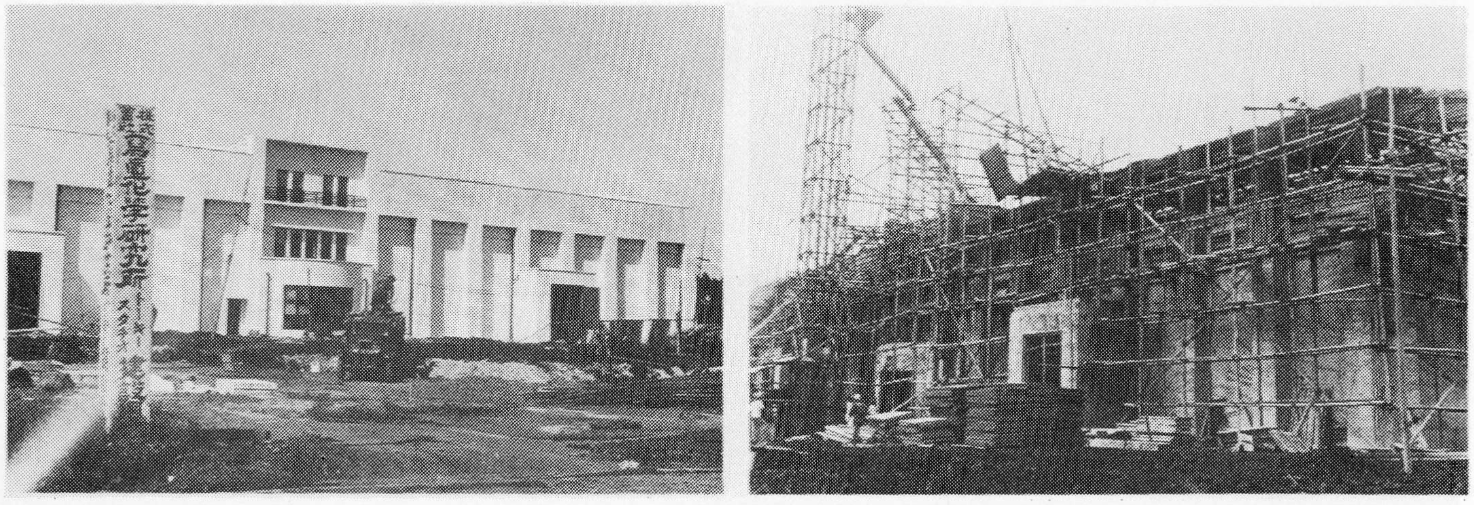
We see that books were full of "tricks" in those days. "Tricks" was a special word in the age of special effects. I looked up "tricks" in "Kojien," and it said that "trick" means (1) deception, humbling, manipulation, falsity, (2) an abbreviation of trick shooting. Then it says that "trick shooting" means "using a tricky device while shooting a film in order to realistically portray something impossible." Trick shooting is a very old-fashioned expression; it was used especially before the war. However, I think it's useful to see how the idea of tricks has changed over time.

In the book *Eiga Oyobi Eiga Geki*, author Shin Terakawa discusses many special effects techniques. Looking through the book, one sees a vast array of trick photographic techniques: speed tricks, such as Superman's high-speed flying; a man with magnetic power; double images and double printing; appearances of ghosts; a fountain pen writing letters by itself; reversion; a cracked bottle returning to its original form; tricks of fade-in and fade-out; a pan of scenery; a nymph appearing out of smoke; Hansel and Gretel by Baby Becky; the same person playing two roles in one scene; stage effects in costume plays with anachronisms; adventure films; jumping hundreds of feet over a cliff; somebody at the top of a skyscaper; a swimming mermaid; magical knives flying past the face of a beauty; cannibals in the South Pacific; monsters; a bean-sized man dancing on a table; the development of a machine that produces a moving cabin for a ship at sea; the sinking of a big ship; tricks in THE TEN COMMANDMENTS; a giant wave appearing on a road; the Thief of Baghdad and the Calif's magicians escaping from a palace.

The book discusses how some tricks were combined with stop motion. One-turn-one picture, combined with single picture movement is mentioned, as well as backward movement, slow motion, quick

日本映画
南海の花束
望楼の決死隊
熱風
決戦の大空へ
加藤隼戦闘隊
雷撃隊出動
TOHO VIDEO
ハワイ・マレー沖海戦

Above are the covers for some of Eiji Tsuburaya's pre and war-time films now available in Japan on videocasette; from left to right down: NANAKAI NO HANABATA, BORO NO KESHITAI, NEPPU, KESSEN NO OZORAE, KATO HAYATO SENTOTAI, DENGENKITAI SHUSTUDO, HAWAI MAREI OKI-KAISEN, TAIHEYO NO TSUBASA (a post-war film).



The existing Toho Studios, built on October 25, 1934 (left); P.C.L. or Photo Chemical Labrotory, later the Toho Suzuri Studios (right).

motion, double printing, double exposure, and masking. It also talks about double printing in THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

From the early to the middle of the 20th century, these were the only techniques that people knew about, and Japanese filmmakers didn't necessarily make use of them in their films. They didn't think that fake tricks were very important, although they were interested in them. Fade-in and fade-out were considered to be a trick then, which shows how primitive they were. Later, the world saw a wave of film tricks in famous masterpieces such as LOST WORLD (1926) and THE KEYSTONE COPS (1929). The Schufftan Process and Pomeroy Process were designed, and tricks became more complicated. (I'll talk about this in a later section.)

In 1933, Iwao Mori spoke about tricks in his book *Eiga Seisakuho*. "Movies have a wide variety of tricks," he wrote, "with which stage drama cannot compare by backstage changes...." This allows a movie more options in the way in which it can depict something. A movie can repeat the same situation realistically on the screen, and within itself can create a world with many ways of bringing things to life. There are mechanical effects, photographic effects, and different editing techniques.

Spectators usually enjoy the direct stage representation they see performed live. On the other hand, moviegoers only see what the director shows on screen. It is this characteristic that makes tricks more useful. Tricks become one of the means of dramatic presentation, representing certain things for special purposes.

Sometimes tricks were used to make a production more economical, such as set tricks, glass work, or Shuffan works. I suppose this is a very modern idea in his book. Iwao Mori is a scholastic movie critic. Soon after this he became a businessman and was an important person in Toho who established its special photographic techniques department.

KING KONG was released in Japan in September of 1933 and THE INVISIBLE MAN in March of 1936. Both of these were great hits. Eiji Tsuburaya was very impressed with these two movies. At that time he was a director of photography, and later he became known to the world for camera tricks. He studied trick techniques for a long time in Japan, wanting to make them successful in the then-primitive Japanese film world.

Toho established its special photographic techniques department in 1939, after which special effects became very popular. Tsuburaya wrote about special techniques in *Eiga Satsueigaku Tokuhon* (Movie Shooting Techniques), Part II. At this time "special techniques" were recognized as a form of artistic expression, and that name stuck until after the war.

When I opened *Eiga Hyakkajiten* (Hakyosha, June 10, 1956) to see what it said about special techniques, it called it "cinematographic effects." This meant effective techniques in general, applying to any method of portraying something impossible on the screen. The basic methods are the following:

(1) effects due to camera efficiency (capacity) or operation;

(2) effects due to the operation of lenses, mirrors, or other equipment;

(3) effects due to the efficiency of photosensitive materials;

(4) effects due to the operation of development or printing;

(5) effects due to the efficiency of projection.

Here is a quote from the book *Special Shooting* (spfx):

"Special shooting. In general, the meaning of special shooting is any method that requires special techniques and shooting machines or effects under special circumstances, different from normal shooting. For example, this includes high speed photography, slow motion, underwater photography, X-ray photography, microphotography, etc."

This is quite different from the idea of spfx that we have today.

Special effects have become very popular since 1962 in the mass media, and Eiji Tsuburaya has been in the spotlight as the director of special effects at Toho. Special effects became popular instead of the words "tricks" or "special techniques," one of which was old-fashioned and the other of which was hard to understand. It has planted its roots deeply in the mass media since the time of the first monster boom of 1966.

There are various alternatives to the term special effects. For example, there is special techniques, special

Actress Setsuko Hara in a scene from the film, A NEW LAND. She was abandoned by her finace Yu Kosugi, who loved Ruth Eveller. It was an unspeakable event. Hara was 17 when she made the film.

shooting, technical shooting, or tricks. In a nutshell, one could say that all of these are techniques of showing something impossible on the screen.

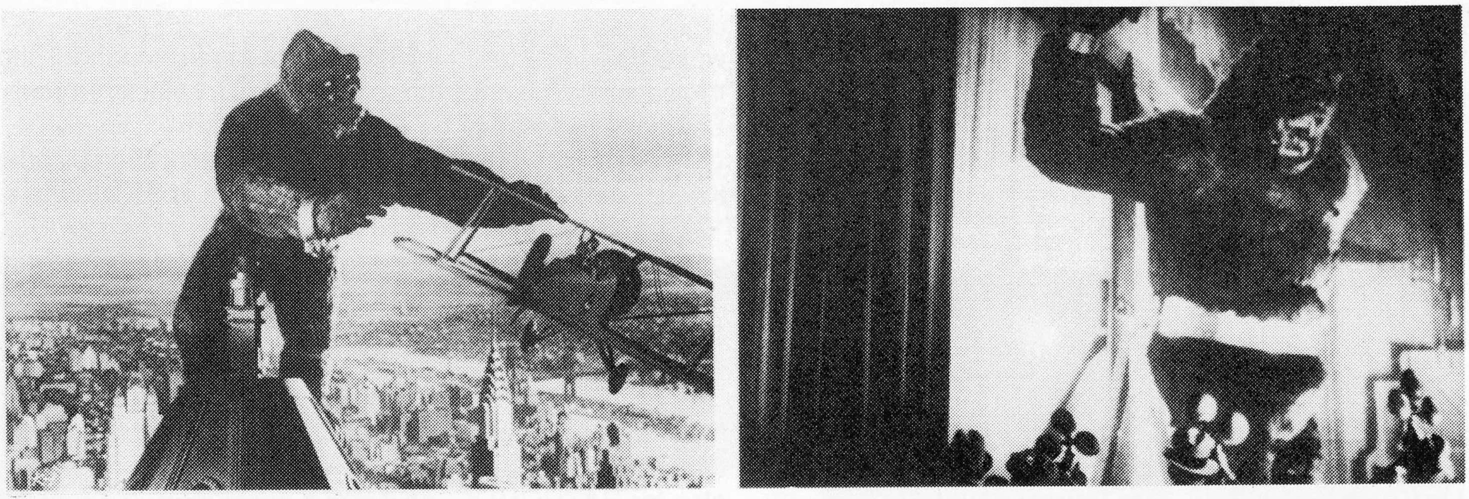
3. From KING KONG To A NEW LAND

"I'm greatly looking forward to KING KONG VS. GODZILLA. It is to be released this August and will be a big hit. It is also a monster movie. People think that monster films and I are on intimate relations with each other. I guess it's because my monster films like GODZILLA have impressed them more than other films. That is okay with me. However, to tell the truth, I don't really like being a monster film professional, so this year I've had some new scripts like "Kaguyahime" (Princess Kaguya), a beautiful fairy tale which female viewers should enjoy for its combination of a love theme with elements of the fantastic.

"But my movie company has produced a very interesting script that combined KING KONG and GODZILLA, so I couldn't help working on this instead of my new fantasy films. This script is special to me; it makes me emotional because it was KING KONG that got me interested in the world of special photographic techniques when I saw it in 1933. KING KONG was a great hit all over the world, including Japan, and RKO Films went from a second-rate film company to a first-rate one.

"I tried to persuade the company to import this technical

Arnold Faunch, director of A NEW LAND. He was famous for his mountaineering films.



Scenes from KING KONG, a film that inspired Eiji Tsuburaya—20 years later GODZILLA was born in Japan (below).

know-how, but they had little interest in it because I was only a cameraman who had been shooting Kazuo Hasegawa's costume plays."
(Eiji Tsuburaya, *Mainichi Newspaper*, March 27, 1960)

It was a matter of luck that he got into a technical career. It is very clear that neither GODZILLA nor HAWAII MAREI OKI-KAISEN (THE WAR AT SEA FROM HAWAII TO MALAYA) would have been born if he hadn't seen KING KONG earlier. Now, both KING KONG and GODZILLA are among the masterpieces of classic films.

Tsuburaya's first successful work, 1939's ATARASHI-SHIKISHI (A NEW LAND), utilized special effects, and was notable for the first full-scale screen process, as well as for the star Setsuko Hara and the fact that the film was a joint Japanese-German work. Arnold Fanch directed the German part and Bansaku Itami helmed the Japanese segments. Tsuburaya wrote about A NEW LAND and its shooting in *Eiga Geijutsu* No. 1 (1939), using his real name Eiichi Tsuburaya. He also wrote about the "Economics of the Screen Process" in *Nihon Eiga* No. 1 (1939). Here is an excerpt from the latter.

"In last year's KAGUYAHIME, I was finally able to use the screen process techniques that I've been studying step by step for the last 45 years. And now, in Fanch's A NEW LAND, I've tried to make it even better, assuring myself that it was almost perfect enough to gain Fanch's approval, since it was better than the Europeans. Until now in Japan we've been covering up with rolling the ordinal projection two or four times faster than the photopgrapher. This is a very primitive method, and not very practical. Many cameramen have tried to roll the shutter at the same speed in each cut by hand operation, and that is a waste of cameramen. In the end, due to defective functioning, this was not an effective substitute for shooting on location. It was only used for the scenery out of the window of a train, or from a car at best. People often say that if we had a perfect screen back we could make films very economically without shooting on location. So far, I don't think this screen process is very reliable. We can't understand how this whole process will work until our primitive equipment gets better and more reliable."

I suppose that Tsuburaya's message is more effective because he is humble about himself.

It was almost a year after A NEW LAND had been made, in February 1938, when Fanch visited Japan. During this time Tsuburaya was at the J.O. Studios in Kyoto.He started his career at the age of 18 in 1920 and worked at first for Tennenshoku Katsudo Shashin Company. Then he changed jobs to Kokkatsu, Ogasawara Productions, Kinugasa Eiga Renmei, Shochiku Kyoto, Nikkatsu, and J.O. Talkie (later J. O. Studios).

Eiji Tsuburaya in a photograph from his own book Eiga Satsueigaku Tokuhon II, published February 15, 1943. He was the greatest pioneer of Japanese special effects—but, he hasn't been studied enough.

In February of 1934, at J.O. Studios, his fortune changed. The founder of J.O. Studios, Yoshio Osawa, recognized Tsuburaya's talent and invited him to study these techniques. Remember that KAGUYAHIME was done in November, 1937, at J.O. Studios. Here is what Eijiro Nagatoni wrote about it in *Eiga Geijutsu*, No. 7, January 30, 1965:

"This movie was an adventurous attempt modeled after the 'Taketori Monogatari' (Tale of the Bamboo Cutter), a famous traditional Japanese story, and was intended for export. The director was Yoshiji Tanaka, the acting director was Nobuo Aoyanagi, the cameraman was Eiji Tsuburaya, the recorder was Keisuke Mandakara, the music director was Michio Miyagi, and equipment and make-up was by Eikyu Matsuoka, a famous artist. The actors included the newcomer Kazuko Kitazawa as well as Ichiro Fujiyama and Hiroshi Shiomi. It was mostly done on the set, with a miniature model of Kyoto that included cow-drawn carriages and people that moved. Kenzo Matsuoka, a cartoon artist, was in charge of miniaturization. Construction of an open set for the large streets of Kyoto required so much historical study and expense that we decided to try the new idea of miniaturization. Miniaturization was also used in RASHOMON. In the last scene, when angels come down for Kaguyahime, the background is covered with one large black velvet cloth and white dancers appear in front of it, superimposed on the sky, creating an image of angels rising in the sky. The primitive equipment of that time was very different from today, so it was quite difficult for Eiji Tsuburaya."

I'd like to see Eiji Tsuburaya's KAGUYAHIME! It would be wonderful if it were found. In Japan, important people like cabinet ministers probably think that movies aren't culture. So I don't expect it to be easy to find his film.

I'd like to quote again about some of the episodes in KAGUYAHIME, as well as Yoshio Osawa and Tsuburaya.

Tsuburaya: "It was wonderful of Mr. Osawa to be generous enough to spend money on me to study these new techniques. I am indebted to him for my success with special photographic techniques." As he said this, his spfx talent was just coming to the fore with KAGUYAHIME."

Thinking that it was impossible to make large sets for the streets of Kyoto, the cartoon artist Kenzo Masaoka decided to make a miniature of Kyoto of around the Heian period, and also for RASHOMON. Tsuburaya wonderfully put together a superposition of a cow-drawn carriage and a crowd of people in front of the miniature set. But Yoshio Osawa tenaciously held on to his beliefs concerning business contracts and the machinery used for making films:

"I prefer Michell's camera to Bell's. Even if this is J.O., can I use Michell's camera?," asked Tsuburaya.

"No, you can't. We use only Bell Howell's," Osawa replied.

"I'd like to use Eastman's film rather than Agfa's."

"No, you can't. Our company has a business contract with Agfa."

Yoshio Osawa was an obstinate man beyond description...

"Mr. Osawa was crazy. For his youth, I've never seen such an obstinate man, " said Tsuburaya loudly after leaving Mr. Osawa's room. "Don't speak so loudly; he'll hear you," said the manager Ueno nervously to Tsuburaya. For about a month after that, Tsuburaya didn't speak to Osawa. But Osawa didn't mind. Finally, they both got tired of their stubbornness and became friends again. (From *Yoshio Osawa*, by Yoshio Aragano, Osawa Co. Ltd.)

I like learning about their personalities from episodes like this.

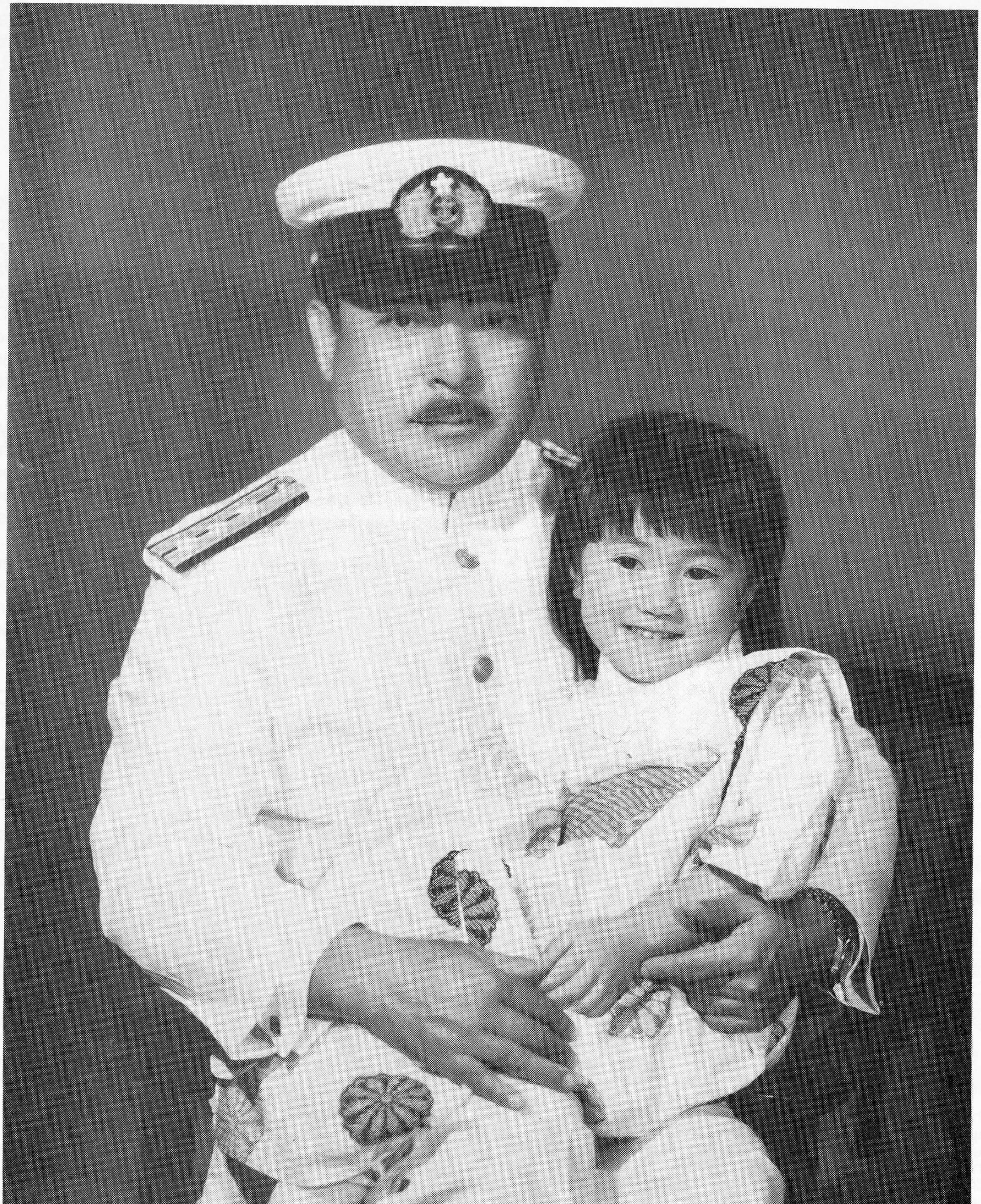
Now, back to A NEW LAND. The screening took 60 cuts, of which 20 were used together with the miniaturization. Strictly speaking, this was not the first time that this process was used, but it may be the first time it was used well. In fact, several films of other companies also used this process prior to A NEW LAND. In *Eiga to Geijutsu Special Edition, No. 3* in 1937, "How To Shoot A Composite Film," the cameramen for Shochiku and Nikkatsu wrote about it like this: "Several trials were necessary until composite films could be done correctly. The lack of skill in minor film companies is beyond description." So, A NEW LAND was the first successful film of this type in Japan.

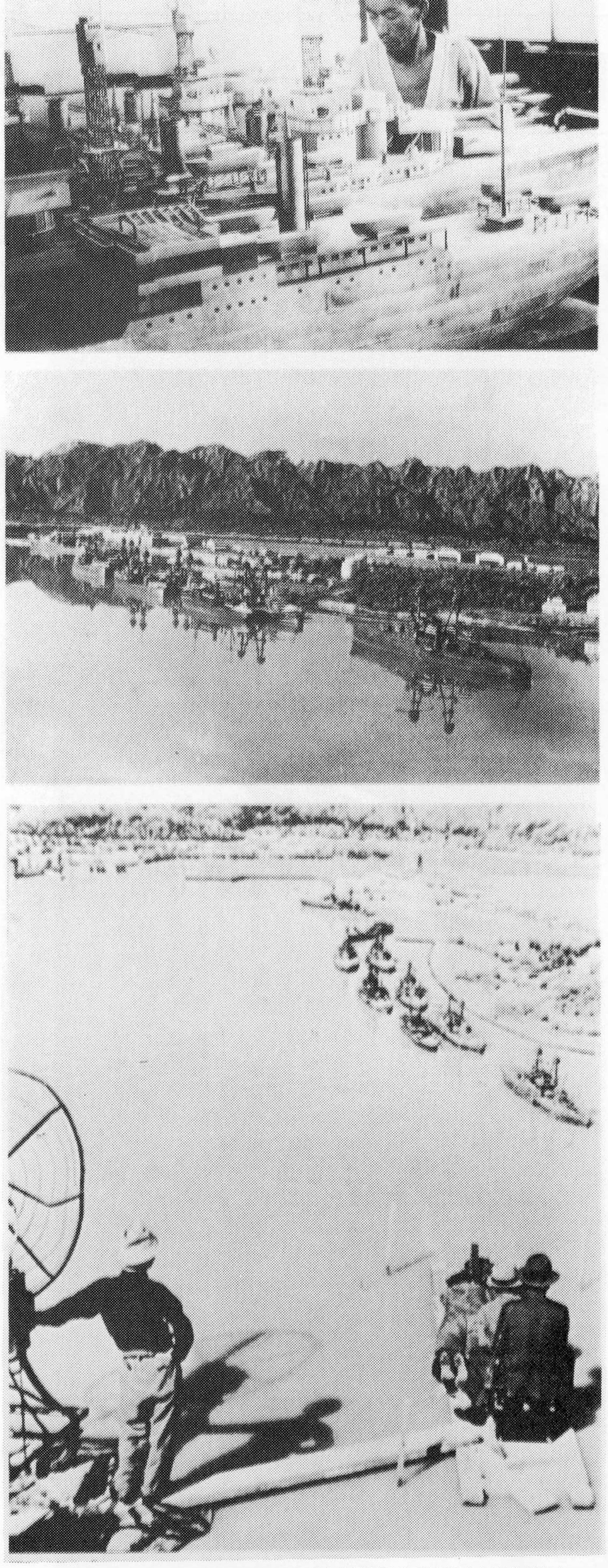
By the way, I was lucky to have seen John Ford's STAGECOACH again last year. I've seen it several times, but this was the first time in a large theatre. To tell the truth, I wanted to count the number of screen process cuts. What a waste of time! However, I was surprised to find it had 140 cuts.

I also became disappointed with the technical difference between America and Japan. A NEW LAND was made in 1929; STAGECOACH in 1931. Screen process needs better techniques, because it is more difficult than we expected. First of all, it needs to synchronize the shooting speed and the projection speed, and it also needs complicated lighting.

TREASURED PHOTO DEPARTMENT

I recently met Susumu Hatanaka for the first time. When we met, he showed me a photo of his wife as a child. Her father, Jun Tazaki was well-known as Captain Jinguji from the movie ATRAGON (KAITEI GUNKAN). I was surprised to learn that he had this photo for all these years. When I told him this, he laughed with embarassment. This was one of his wife's secret copies. The photo was used in the filmas Jinguji's treasured photo of his daughter.





The film THE WAR AT SEA FROM HAWAII TO MALAYA is an epoch-making work of spfx in Japan. The huge miniature set of Peal Harbour was so expensive—it's hard to believe that the film was made during wartime. Unbelievably, the film is over 40 years old, and it's are still as powerful as newsreel footage.

Here is an excerpt from *Musei Senso Nikki*, August 30, 1936: "Shooting was supposed to start at 10:00, but actually it was past noon. I was at Eiken Studios for the first time and they started to shoot in conjunction with screen processing of Achoko Entatsu (a famous Japanese comedian).

"Special photographic techniques are very difficult to do, because one must wait for a long time until everything is right. While waiting, we—Ropa (a comedian) and Deko (a Japanese actress)—chatted with Ford." This is the Japanese shooting process. In America people think of efficiency first, and so they make more of the masterpieces of film history. I hope that someday the situation is reversed.

4. The Birth of Toho's Special Effects Department

Then, P.C.L. and J.O. joined up and merged. Iwao Mori and Rin Masuya came to see Tsuburaya from Tokyo to encourage the special techniques department. More than just establishing a special techniques department, Tsuburaya wanted to expand his study of special effects techniques. He was both cameraman and producer of HYAKU-MANNIN NO GASSHO and KAGUYAHIME, and he also directed KOUTATSUBUTE starring Ichimaru (a singer). In 1940 he was asked to work in Suzuri Studios, for his screen processing techniques.

Later he worked in the Tokyo studio. "Unfortunately, none of the cameramen in the Tokyo studio trusted my techniques. Ikenaga felt sorry for me and asked me to shoot the emperor's family in a separate group. I started by shooting the emperor's family grave and its historical roots. This took almost a year."

This film of Tsuburaya's is called KODO NIHON. Even after this, the Tokyo Studio still didn't let him shoot. (From "The Pioneer of Special Effects" by Ippei Hata in *Eiga Hyoron*, August, 1961). That was about 20 years after Toho established their special effects department in 1940. He came to the Tokyo Studio from Kyoto in 1939.

"I came with the screen processing machine from J.O. Studios. Executive Mori of the Tokyo Studio had requested the machine. Mori told Hiroshi Sakai, the technical director, about the future of special photographic techniques and asked me to work at this department. As I'd worked shooting dramatic movies for 20 years, I hesitated to accept his offer, but I had a lot of interest in this advanced idea. So I started my career as a professional special photographic technician.

"Starting my career I was head of the special techniques department, since I was the only one in the department. This was pretty weird." (From "Tokugi Eiga no Oitachi" by Eiji Tsuburaya in *Hoen*, June 1940.)

"In 1940, P.C.L. merged the Toho and J.O.Studios and made the name Toho Ltd. At this time I was in charge of the special technique´s department and decided to made this my full time position. So I invited Tsuburaya to the Tokyo Studion with the assistance of the studio manager, Iwao Mori. Tsuburaya started his career in the special group by making army films.

"In spite of a bad situation, he made great progress in his work. Tsuburaya stimulated Iwao Mori, a man of talent, to go with this opportunity and put the special effects department in good order." (From "Tsuburaya Eijikun o Shinobu," by Hiroshi Sakai in *Eiga Terebi Gijutsu*, May, 1972.)

Iwao Mori, in "Dakyogirai," from the *Asahi Journal*, November 12, 1967: In 1927 I went to Hollywood for the first time. I saw that there were Japanese working in every department, but the high-salaried ones were in the special effects department. I decided that special effects techniques were the only way to save money on large-scale shooting. SInce the Japanese are skillful with their hands and have a good sense of beauty, they should do well in this department. Soon after this I actually started producing films.

"For NIKKA JIHEN we couldn't shoot the battle scene in the ordinary way. However, the other staff in the studio didn't like using special effects in place of real shooting. They were unhappy about special effects. I think that real shooting is both expensive and dangerous, and above all it wouldn't have been effective. I was sure that special effects was the only way to save the situation.

"Mr. Tsuburaya was a first-rate cameraman at this time. He also had experience as a director and was talented with special techniques. I earnestly asked him to help the special effects department grow. The studio staff continued to resist Tsuburaya and me, beyond description. But Tsuburaya's persistence and techniques made him successful for the first time with HAWAII MAREI OKI-KAISEN."

In "Eiga no Majutsushi," in *Shukan Bunshun*, August 3, 1961, Tsuburaya is quoted as saying, "When I started to work in Toho it was 1939. At that time I was the only person in the special techniques department. Not only that, but tricks were considered to be top secret, so I couldn't get any help with special effects. There was no one to depend on except myself. The traditional people in the studio were indifferent toward me. I had to get into the studio secretly. Only Iwao Mori was helpful, because he understood the situation. I was able to stand it because of him."

He officially changed his job to the new special photographic techniques department on November 27, 1939. I'd like to quote directly from his own records:

"Some of the first major organic Japanese films were KAIGUN BAKUGEKITAI (director Sotoji Kimura—Toho, 1942), MOYURU OZORA (THE BURNING SKY—director Yutaka Abe, Toho, 1942), SONGOKU I, II (THE MONKEY KING—director Kajiro Yamamoto, Toho, 1942), and NANKAI NO HANATABA (director Yutaka Abe—Toho, 1944)."

Let's talk about Japanese pre-war special effects techniques in more detail. Though this may seem old-fashioned, now is the time of a retrospection boom. It is not my intention to be a part of this boom, for I would enjoy writing about this even if no one paid any attention to it.

(TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE)

ANIMATION FROM A TO Z

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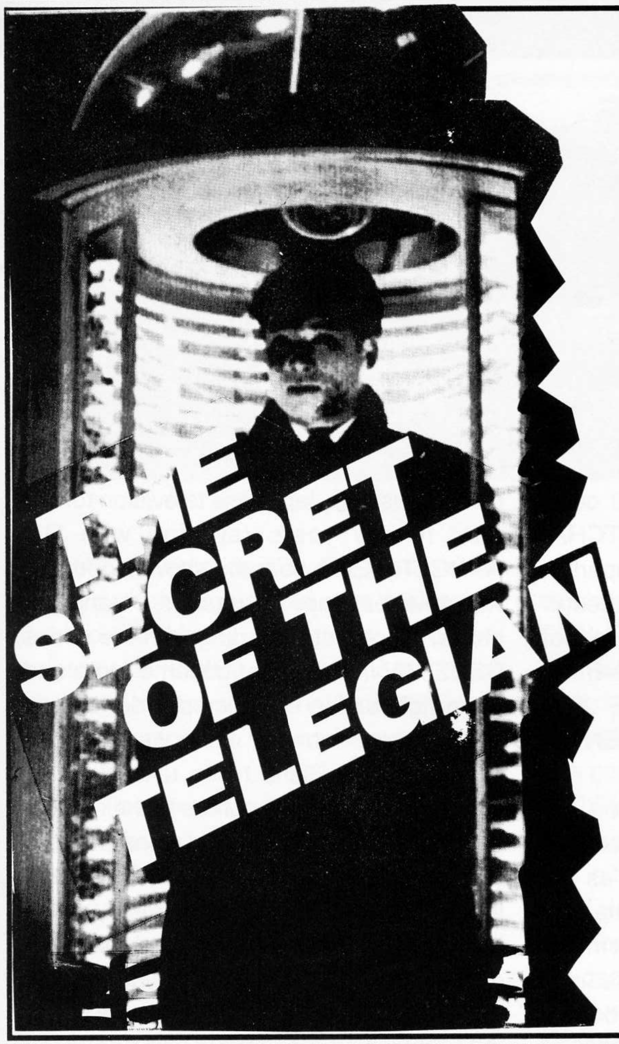
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The minnions of Vyrum—the leaders, the henchmen and the monsters (opposite left); and two of the weird monsters: don't forget to turn off the facet (middle); and who said that flying was the safest way to travel (far right).

BIRDMAN TASK FORCE JETMAN

—Sentai Series takes to the skies…

BOB JOHNSON

Jethawk stands ready for battle (above); the Jetman team in classic macho Sentai pose (right)

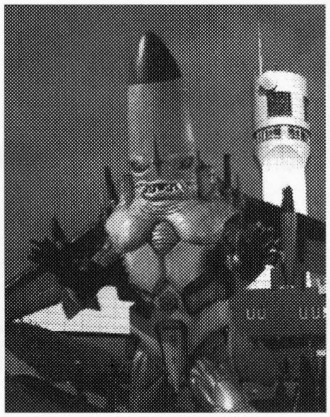
What would you get if you combined elements of TOP GUN, GATCHAMAN and Japanese live-action superheroes? That's what Toei did with the latest in its popular series of Sentai heroes—BIRD TASK FORCE JETMAN (CHOJIN SENTAI JIETOMAN).

The series begins on the Earth Defence Force's orbital space station "Earthship." Earthship serves as the home of the Sky Force Team. Commander Aya Odagiri is on a mission to select members for an elite Jetman team. This team is to consist of 5 men/women whose bodies are able to accept a bombardment of the super-enabling particles of the "Birdonic Wave."

Ryu Tendo is successfully empowered when Earthship comes under attack by VYRUM—other dimensional invaders led by Count Ladeyge. While Earthship is being ripped apart, Ryu tries to rescue his girlfriend who is sucked into the void of outerspace. Ryu is left stunned by the tragedy and is rescued by (Kaori Rokumekan), Yellow Owl (Raita Ohishi) and Blue Swallow (Akko Hayasaka), fighting in unison as Jetman!

The Sentai series has been airing continuously on Japanese television for the past twenty years (starting with GO RANGER). Each year the show is updated with new costumes, characters, villians, vehicles, robots, etc. Starting with the series DENZIMAN, the format became more and more rigid until a specific episode formula was devised: monster of the week wreaks havoc as the villians try to take over the Earth, Sentai Team X comes to the rescue, fights henchmen, defeats the monster, monster grows to a giant version of itself, team leader (always Red) calls for robot, or vehicles which become robot, and the robot defeats the monster in a similar manner each week. Within this format, the series peaked in the early 1980s with BIOMAN, CHANGEMAN and FLASHMAN.

As JETMAN takes the series flying into the '90s, it attempts to break the old, tired formula without straying too far from what has made it an extremely successful series all these years. The heroes have a wider assortment of weapons with which to deal with their antagonists, VYRUM. Their five individual jets can combine into two different configurations. The first is the Jetpheonix, which much like the Godpheonix in GATCHAMAN, smashes through the giant monsters in the form of a flaming bird. The second is the obligatory giant robot,



Jeticarus. In episode #20, the Jetstriker (a single person, high-speed race car) gains the added ability to change into the Jetbazooka. With a larger assortment of weapons, the show does not have to rely on killing the monster the same way every single week.

The stories are also getting more daring. Though the villians do have henchmen, called Grenam, they do not appear in every episode. The evil VYRUM consists of Count Ladeyge, Gray (a robot), Maria and Tran (a boy). This multi-villian concept began in the Sentai series with BIOMAN and has been a part of the show ever since. The Dimension Beasts are based on organic or inorganic objects, similar to the monsters of the '70s. This means going back to creatures which look like traffic lights, ramen noodle containers, TVs, etc. However, this time there is a reason for this madness. VYRUM utilizes the Dimension Beetle which, when coming into contact with other objects, brings those objects to life to serve the whims of Count Ladeyge and her evil companions. This also brings up some interesting storylines.

In one episode, Akko's childhood teddy bear is brought to life by the Dimension Beetle and instead of serving VYRUM, it follows Akko everywhere she goes, calling her "Mama." When he is finally mutated into a giant, he goes berzerk until Akko (as Blue Swallow) is trapped under some debris while saving a child. He then returns to normal size and rescues Akko and the child before being killed by Count Ladeyge. A swordfight erupts between Akko and Ladeyge ending in a stalemate.

With stories as interesting as this, and breaking the mold of the series, hopefully JETMAN will start a trend which will continue in future Sentai shows.

The concept of JETMAN is very much influenced by the success of TOP GUN, FIRE BIRDS and other recent fighter-pilot movies in Japan, as well as the animated Tatsunoko series GATCHAMAN. Creator Saburo Yatsude has given us a new concept, remenicent of the designs in GATCHAMAN. Commander Odagiri is alot like the stoic Dr. Nambu (Prof. Anderson in the Sandy Frank butchery BATTLE OF THE PLANETS) as she leads the five members of Jetman from their HQ Skycamp, located within the greater Tokyo area. Each member of Jetman wears a costume based on a different bird. These birds are an eagle, condor, owl, swan and swallow, same as in GATCHAMAN. The character of the rebellious Gai Yuki (Black Condor) is very similar to Joe the Condor. Not to mention the Jetpheonix/Godpheonix comparison. There is even a shot in the openning titles which have the Jetman members floating down out of the sky in a circle, an obvious tip of the hat to its inspiration. This is not to say, though, that JETMAN is nothing more than a live action GATCHAMAN.

JETMAN is definitely a Sentai series which, through new inspirations, is taking off in a brand new direction. The special effects are similar to those in recent incarnations, although the flying effects have improved, which they must, since the heroes in JETMAN do much more flying than their predicessors. The creatures, though some may be based on essoteric designs, are executed well and actually come off believeable in most cases.

Instrumental in the look of the series (and also the hype) is up and coming director Kieta Amamiya. Amamiya started out as a character designer at Toei after being an illustrator for Uchusen magazine. He went on to direct the very stylistic FUTURE NINJA (NINJA MIRAI) and the upcoming ZEIRAM videos. He also did optical work on GUNHED. Ariyama directed the first few episodes of JETMAN and should go on to great success as an action director. This also gave Toei ammunition for hyping the series to the fans.

Whatwe're seeing in Japan right now, are more and morelive action and animated movies and series created and designed by a new group of talented craftsmen who grew up watching the older live action and animation. Because of this, more and more of the older concepts are creeping back into today's shows. Where as animation is feeling this in such projects as DANGAIOH, GETTA ROBO GO and the new GIANT ROBO animated OVAs, live action shows are also beginning to show their older inspirations, and JETMAN is an example of this.

JETMAN is a show which is breating new life into an old series, and if fresh new concepts continue to evolve, this twenty year old series should continue to grow for the next twenty years.•

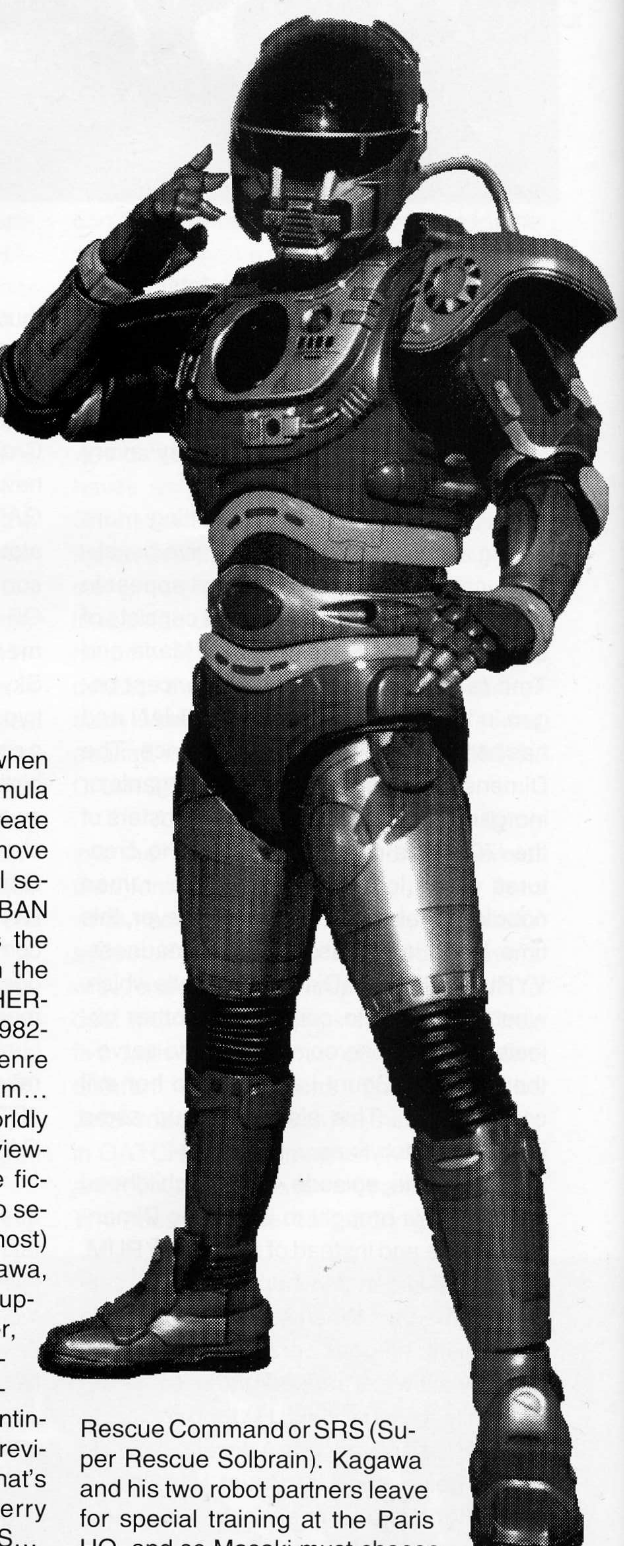
BIRD-MAN TASK FORCE JETMAN (CHOJIN SENTAI JIETOMAN). Produced by Toei TV Productions, Toei Co., Ltd. and TV Asashi. Executive Producer: Takeyuki Suzuki, Created by: Saburo Yatsude, Special Effects: Special Effects Research, Special Effects Director: Hiroshi Butsuda, Scenario: Hiroyuki Kawasaki, et.al, Music: Kazz Toyama. Director: Kieta Amamiya, Shohei Tojo, et.al.

SPECIAL RESCUE COMMAND SOLBRAIN

Japanese superheroes meet the THUNDERBIRDS.

JIRO SUGATA

Sol-Braver stands ready for action (below); armed with the Bothwinder, Sol-Braver leaps from the Solgallop into adventure (bottom left); the crew of the SRS—Hiroshi Miyauchi is center (opposite left); Sol-Jeanne, Sol-Dozer and Sol-Braver—the special rescue command (opposite bottom right).



SPECIAL RESCUE COMMAND SOLBRAIN (TOKU-SHIREI SORUBUREIN), follows on the heels of, and is a direct sequel to SPECIAL POLICE WINSPECTOR (TO-KEI UINSUPEKUTA, 2/90-2/91)—an extremely popular teleseries among Japanese spfx fans for not only its character and story departures, but for its inclusion of actor Hiroshi Miyauchi to the cast. Miyauchi was a popular actor, who specialized in anti-hero parts, during the early-to-late '70s; Kamen Rider V3, Blue Ranger and Zubat, among others. Now, crossing-over from WINSPECTOR to SOLBRAIN, Miyauchi plays the bridging character Commander Masaki.

Toei TV Productions, knowing a hit when they see it, purposely continued the formula from WINSPECTOR and decided to create a bigger, more up-scale setting, and move away from the smaller, more personal series that preceded it; MOBILE COP JIBAN (KIDO-KEIJI JIBAN, 1989-1990) was the "last" of the direct spin-offs cast from the mold of Toei's epoch-making SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN (UCHU KEIJI GIYABAN, 1982-1983), and the Power-suit Hero genre needed a severe shot in the arm... WINSPECTOR threw away the other-worldly villains and mutant monsters, and gave viewers a more realistic application of the fictional technology familiar to Toei's hero series, and put them in the real (well, almost) world. The power-suited Ryoma Kagawa, and his two humanoid-robot support units, Biker and Walter, helped capture the most dislikable and diabolical of criminals in Japan. SOLBRAIN continues that line, but with some revisions—resulting in a series that's WIN-SPECTOR meets Gerry Anderson's THUNDERBIRDS...

Commander Shunsuke Masaki, due to the brilliant success of the Winspector Program, is given the funding and resorces to begin operation of the Special Rescue Command or SRS (Super Rescue Solbrain). Kagawa and his two robot partners leave for special training at the Paris HQ, and so Masaki must choose a new special missions team. Daiki Nishio, Reiko Higuchi and Jun Masuda are selected from dozens of able-bodied SRS members. Nishio dons the power-suit of the Sol-Braver, and Higuchi the power-suit of

the Sol-Jeanne—Masuda becomes their plain-clothes support.

The team also has charge of a multi-purpose, "variable rescue droid", the Sol-Dozer—part robot, part bulldozer. The Sol-Dozer also can change its configuration into a drilling, smashing, caterpillar-driven machine, used very effectively in emergency rescue operations. "He" is carried in Masuda's Soldwrecker mobile vehicle; Sol-Jeanne and Masuda ride the Soldwrecker B, while Sol-Braver travels in the Solgallop. All of these vehicles are carried aboard the Solidstates 1, a giant flying/land mothership, piloted by Takeshi Yazawa and his SRS crew. Commanding from their high-tech HQ, Masaki employs the most sophisticated in computers and sensors in order to face natural disasters, save people in desperate situations, confront terrorists, arsonists, and capture all manner of dangerous criminals.

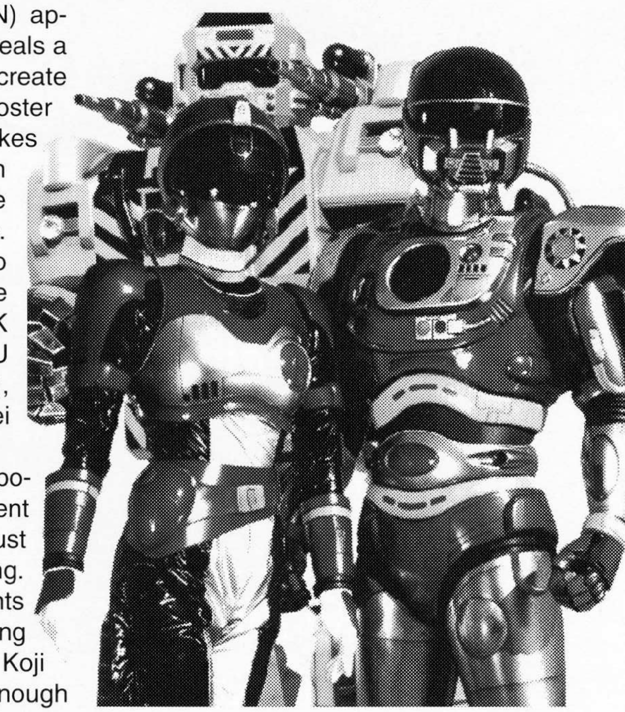
Technically, this is one of Toei's greatest achievements, the spfx provided by Nobuo Yajima (MESSAGE FROM SPACE) and his team are top-notch, but appear too infrequently—and there is not enough physical action, which made Toei leaders in the superhero genre. Unfortunately, in Japan, parents' groups are putting pressure on the producers of these types of shows, to tone-down the violent aspects in them [see interview with Toei producer Susumu Yoshikawa in issue #2—ed.]. This is the most negative aspect of the shows nowadays—but, the new format created by WINSPECTOR has allowed for this—that's why some of the Sentai Series seem to dull, they're the same shows *without* the conflict, which is their point...

SOLBRAIN is a step-up from WINSPECTOR in most areas, the stories, dilemmas, and characters are more intriguing—and as with WINSPECTOR, the directors have a penchant for cameos by veteran stars: Junichi Haruta (JAC superstar, who in the past has played Goggle Black in GOGGLE V, Dyna Black in DYNAMAN, and the villain Mad Gallant in JUSPION) appears, playing an SRS officer who steals a Solid-suit Sol-Braver prototype to create trouble for his old rival Nishio; an imposter of Ryoma Kagawa appears, and it takes both Solbrain and Winspector to team up to defeat the interlopers. This is one of the better aspects of the series. Hiroshi Miyauchi is great for fans to watch, and remember his dynamic style from such series as SECRET TASK FORCE GORANGER (HIMITSU SENTAI GORENJIYA, 1975-78), where Miyauchi played Akira Shinmei aka Blue Ranger.

Of course, the camera-work, composition, editing and music are all of current Toei excellence, so any misgivings must be found within the acting and scripting. The acting is competent of the currents in Japanese filmmaking, but these young players are no Toshiro Mifunes or Koji Tsurutas, although they are good enough for this type of drama/action series.

The scripting leaves a little to be desired, and although the dialogue is mostly crisp, the storylines are cliched and reused from the files of WINSPECTOR. There could be room for improvement here, as Solbrain encounter only just plain criminals, which has the same effect that resulted from watching the '70s teleseries, THE INCREDIBLE HULK: apathy. In Japan, there are many fans who believe that Toei has made a great step in the genre by removing the monsters/mutants from WINSPECTOR and SOLBRAIN; but, there are an equal number of fans who are disappointed in this move. But to be fair, the inclusion of monsters didn't help JIBAN from being dull either; the parents' groups are the ones causing the most damage to the genre.

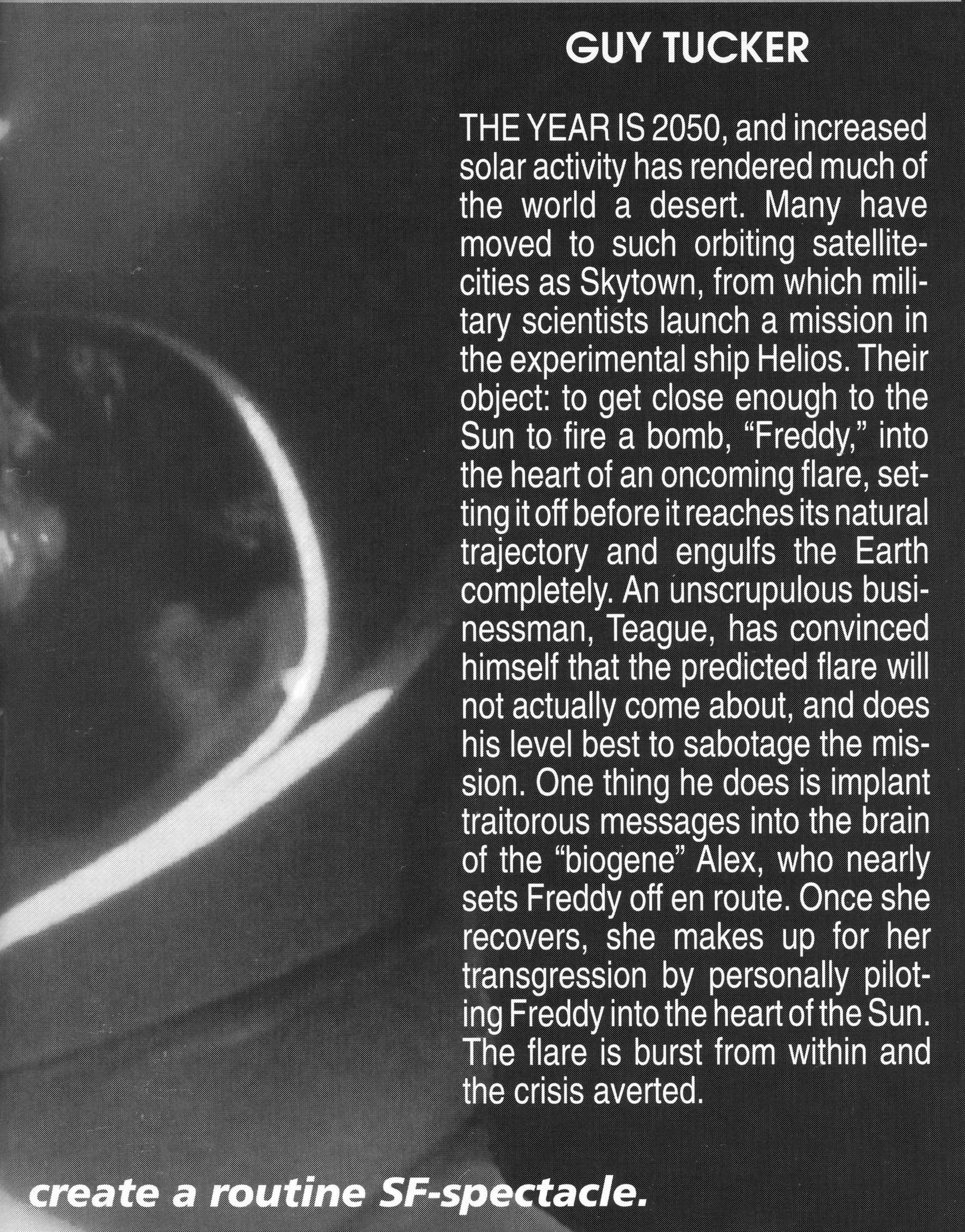
Still, there is enough going on in each episode at a lightening pace, and spiced with enough action (directed by Japan Action Club's Junji Yamaoka), that more often than not, SPECIAL RESCUE COMMAND SOLBRAIN succeeds to entertain its viewers. I'm curious to see what direction Toei takes this theme to next.•



SPECIAL RESCUE COMMAND SOLBRIAN (TOKU-SHIREI SORUNUREIN aka SUPER RESCUE SOLBRAIN). Broadcast Date: 2/91- (now broadcasting). Produced by Toei TV Productions. Executive Producer: Susumu Yoshikawa. Created by Saburo Yatsude. Scenarios: Susumu Takahisa, et. al. Directors: Takeshi Ogasawara, et. al. Spfx: Special Effects Reseach, Inc. Spfx Director: Nobuo Yajima. Starring: Hiroshi Miyauchi (Commander Shunsuke Masaki).

SOLAR CRISIS

Japanese money and American know-how

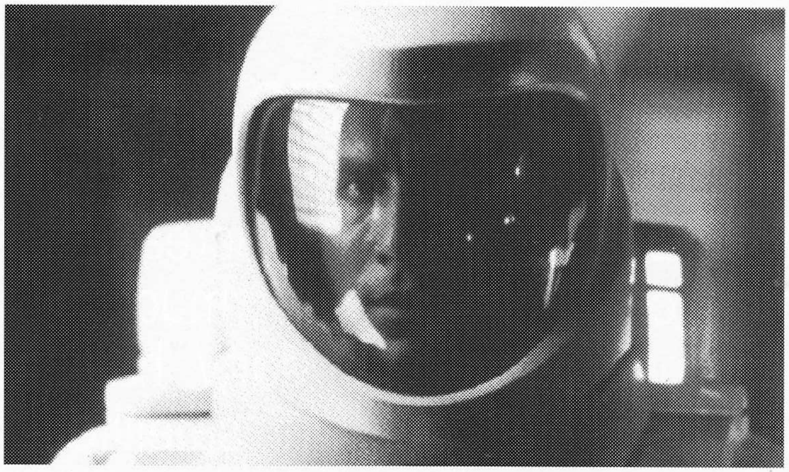


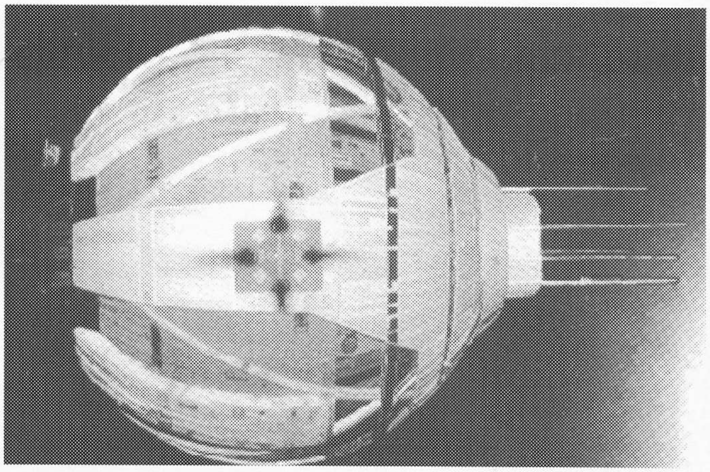
GUY TUCKER

THE YEAR IS 2050, and increased solar activity has rendered much of the world a desert. Many have moved to such orbiting satellite-cities as Skytown, from which military scientists launch a mission in the experimental ship Helios. Their object: to get close enough to the Sun to fire a bomb, "Freddy," into the heart of an oncoming flare, setting it off before it reaches its natural trajectory and engulfs the Earth completely. An unscrupulous businessman, Teague, has convinced himself that the predicted flare will not actually come about, and does his level best to sabotage the mission. One thing he does is implant traitorous messages into the brain of the "biogene" Alex, who nearly sets Freddy off en route. Once she recovers, she makes up for her transgression by personally piloting Freddy into the heart of the Sun. The flare is burst from within and the crisis averted.

create a routine SF-spectacle.

Photos ©NHK/GAKKEN





A project Astronaut begins dangersous assignment to the sabotaged reactor room; The Helios en route to the sun.

This the first Japanese-American science fiction collaboration since MESSAGE FROM SPACE, is equally poorly planned, but twenty times as expensive and nowhere nearly as entertaining. MESSAGE was a wild, colorful takeoff on STAR WARS and Japanese costume pictures; SOLAR CRISIS is an indifferently crafted, uncredited remake of GORATH. "Based on the novel by Takeshi Kawata" (which was unpublished until the film's release), the film is the same old shtick the Japanese film industry has been doing for years. It seems all the more tired, somehow, in the hands of this particular group of Western filmmakers.

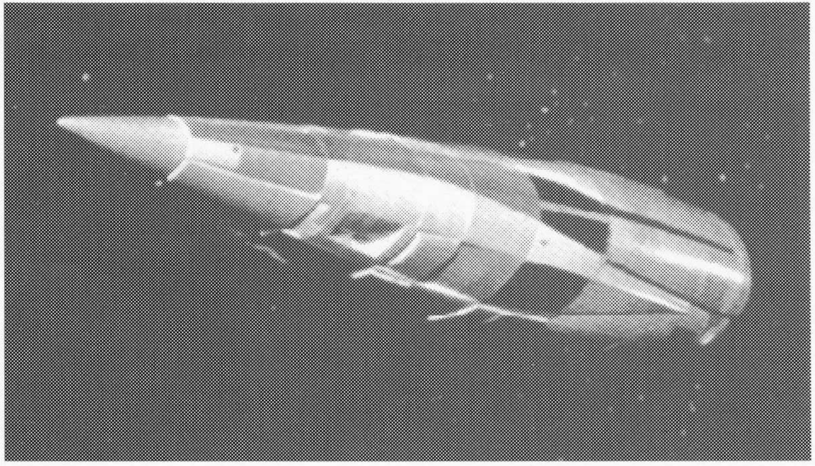
True, Sarafian (best known for the 1971 cult film VANISHING POINT) keeps it moving, and if Edlund's effects are a bit on the mechanical side, he's still probably the best we've got. It's not boring. But it's painfully, even insultingly, routine—and weirdly emotionless. GORATH was Ishiro Honda's most ebullient film—essentially an action-adventure piece, yet with a happy humanity that Sarafian's picture sorely lacks. Two of the most touching scenes Honda ever shot are in GORATH: the workers overjoyed to find the Earth is finally in motion, and the final shot of the jets at the bottom of the globe shutting off. Sarafian too closes his picture with a shot of the preserved Earth, but it doesn't work; nobody he's shown us even seems to be worth saving (except for Jack Palance, terrific as the growling, grunting desert scavenger who helps out Nemec; but he gets killed early on).

As for how poorly the characters are presented, check out Heston—though his nickname indicates a certain skill with firearms (he blows Peter Boyle's helijet out of the sky—the least satisfying villain's death I've seen in years, though Boyle deserves no better), we don't find out he's called "Skeet" until the end credits! Matheson commands the mission, and nothing else—he has no personal crisis or much of anything to do except command and get kissed while unconscious by Schofeld. If we feel sorry for the biogene Schofeld, it's because we've been programmed by earlier pictures to do so. Ishiro Honda and Takeshi Kimura gave us believable people struggling against Gorath; Takeshi Kawata gives us a color-by-numbers scenario.

Good points: One of Edlund's rocket models is a dead ringer for the one Heston rode to the PLANET OF THE APES. Brenda Bakke, almost unrecognizable in short black hair, plays Boyle's mistress and is sultry as all get-out. I liked her in GUNHED; she doesn't do anything in this picture, but I think now I love her anyway. (She's in the recent video release DEATH SPA, probably shot quite a while ago since the late Merritt Butrick is a costar.) And the photography by Russ (CAMERON'S CLOSET) Carpenter is superlative.

Worst point: Maurice Jarre's score. Jarre's a big deal in Japan—he scored SHOGUN and TOKYO BLACKOUT (not to mention that top-ten hit "Lara's Theme" from DR. ZHIVAGO), and has conducted numerous concerts there, including a "Hommage to Kurosawa" (who he's probably never met). I'm sure he was the choice of the Japanese producers. There's some of his accustomed electronic drooling, and then some stirring choral music at the end which works nicely, but happens to be stolen from Orff's "Carmina Burana." (He tries to be subtle about it—he picks the quiet part and makes it booming.) I've heard that the film will be rescored for American release, but I don't believe it—nobody's going to spend that kind of money on a wreck that'll be lucky if it cracks the Top 50 Video Rental charts.•

Minami & Alex plot the course for the Ra Probe (left); Teague and Dr. Beeson, "drop off" a friend.

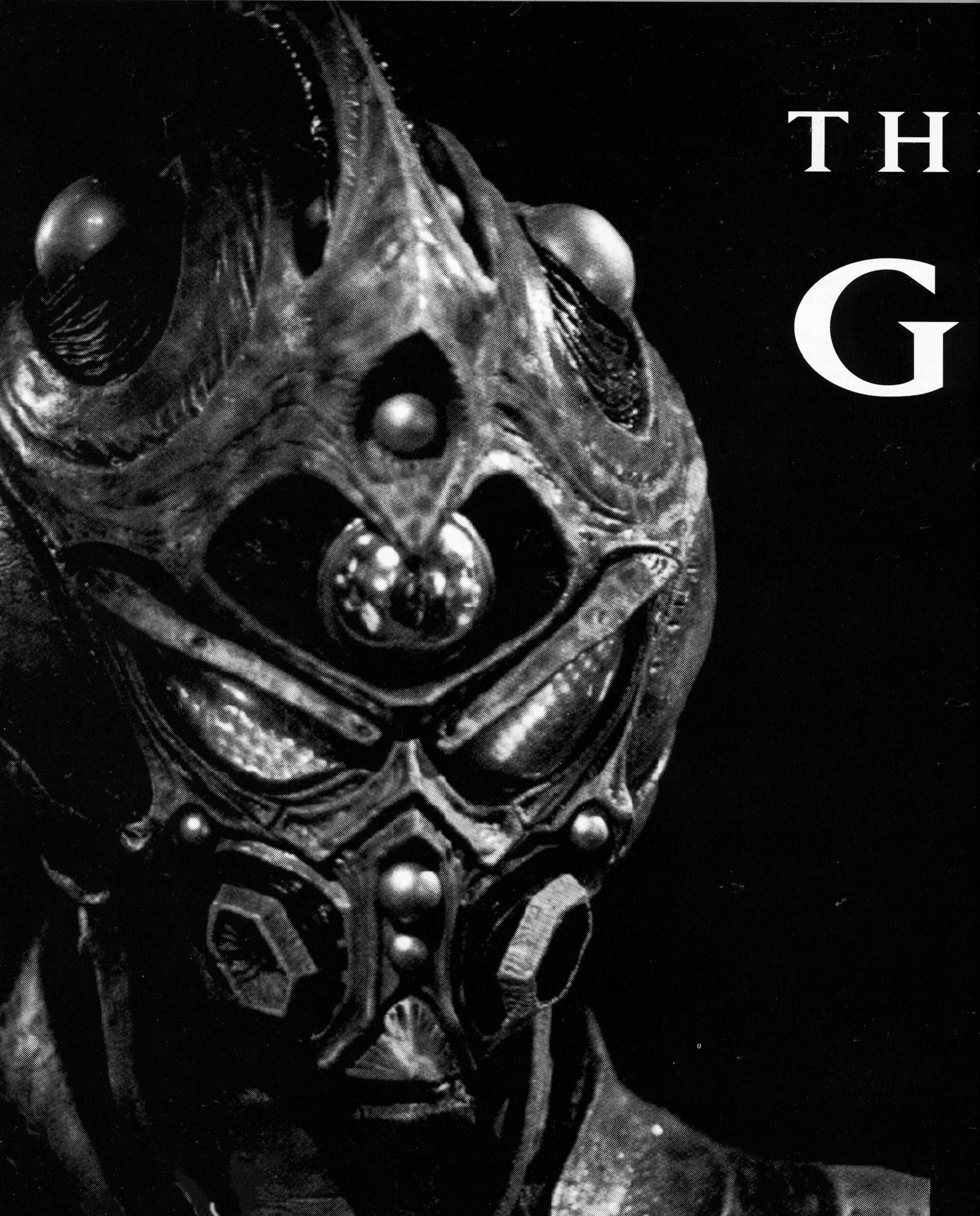


Col. "Skeet" Kelso (Charlton Heston) rescues his grandson (Corky Nemec) ; the Ra probe, with Alex aboard, heads for its final mission into the heart of sol.

SOLAR CRISIS/CRISIS 2050

(KURAISHISU NIJU-GOJU NEN)

Presented by HIDETO FURUOKA, HIROSHI FURUOKA (GAKKEN) and SHUJI TANUMA (NHK ENTERPRISES). Executive Producers TAKEHITO SADAMURA and TAKESHI KAWATA. Producers TSUNEYUKI MORISHIMA and JAMES NELSON. Based on the Novel by TAKESHI KAWATA. Screenplay by JOE GANNON & TED SARAFIAN. "Visual Futurist" SYD MEAD. Costumes by ROBERT TURTURICE. Production Design by GEORGE JENSON. Art Director JOHN BRUCE. Technical Advisor RICHARD J.TERRILE P.H.D.. Music by MAURICE JARRE. Director of Photography RUSS CARPENTER. Producer/Director of Special Visual Effects RICHARD EDLUND. Directed by RICHARD C. SARAFIAN. Cast: TIM MATHESON (Capt.Steve Kelso), CHARLTON HESTON (Col."Skeet" Kelso), ANNABEL SCHOFIELD (Alex), PETER BOYLE (Teague), TETSUYA BESSHO (Ken Minami), CORKY NEMEC (Mike Kelso), JACK PALANCE (Travis James Richards), PAUL KOSLO (Dr.Haas), SANDY McPEAK (Gurney), SCOTT ALAN CAMPBELL (McBride), FRANTZ TURNER (Lamare), SILVANA GALLARDO (T.C.), DAN SHOR (Harvard), DORIAN HAREWOOD (Borg), BRENDA BAKKE (Dr. Claire Beeson) and PAUL WILLIAMS as the voice of FREDDY.



TH
G

UYVER

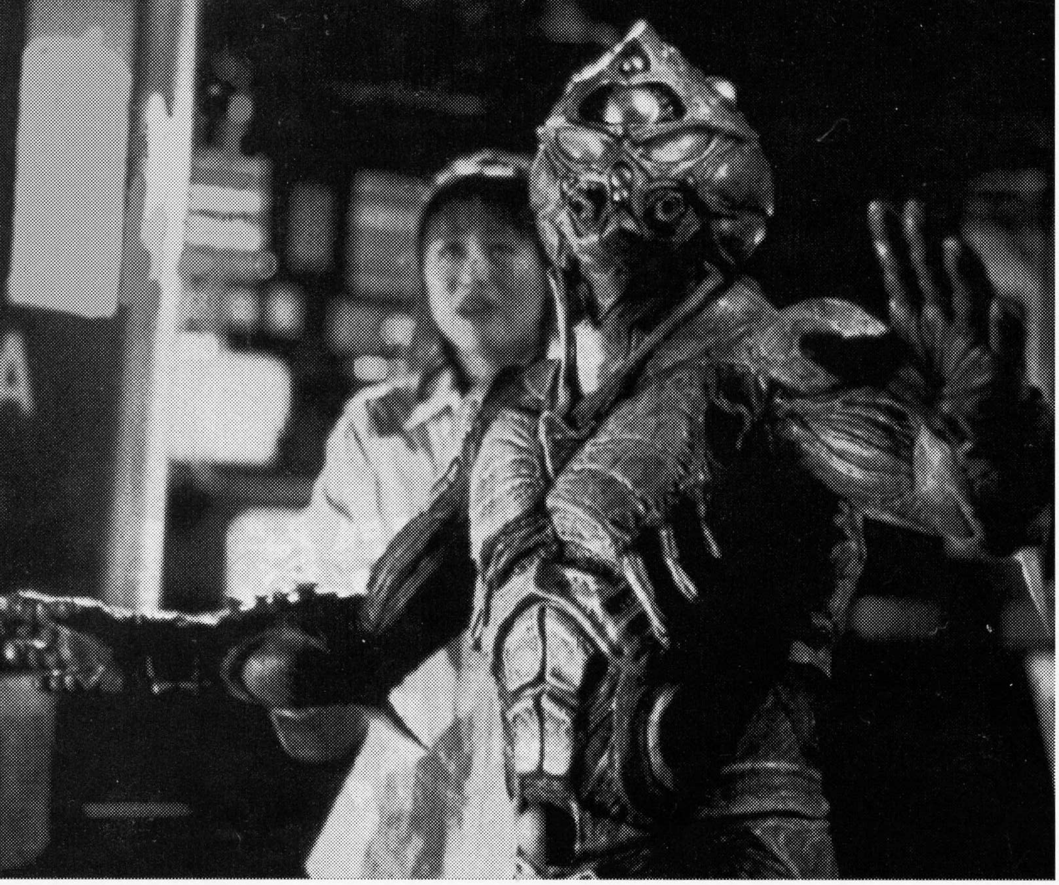
Give me Ultraman any day...

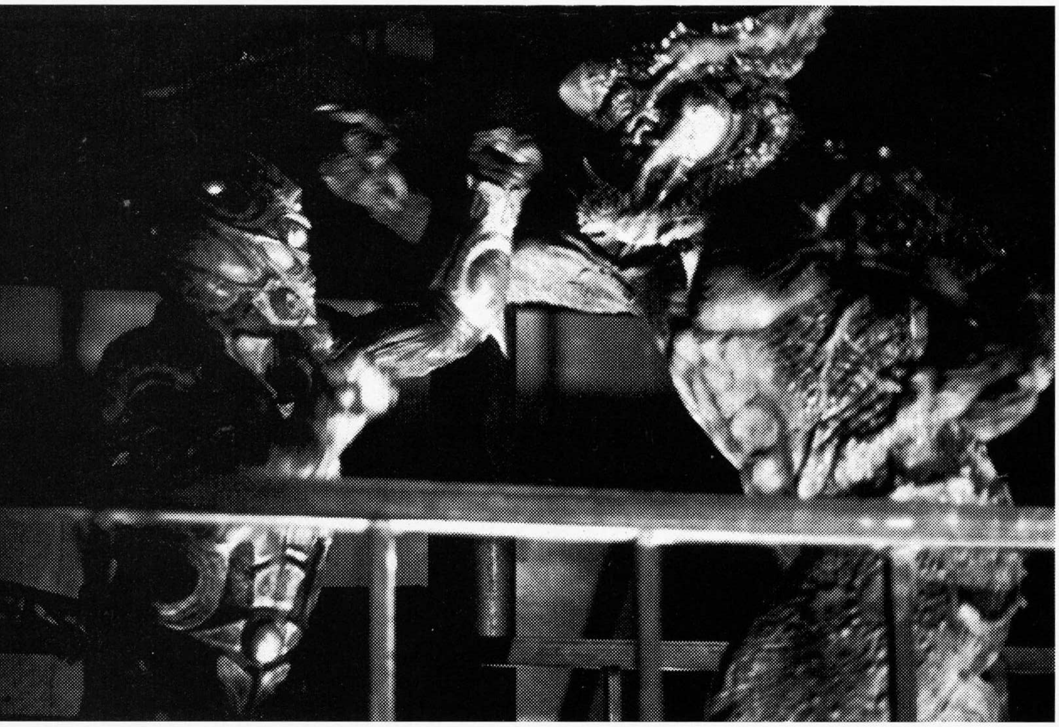
WILLIAM WINKLER

Brian Yzuna, producer of some of the most bizarre and bloodiest horror films of the 1980s: REANIMATOR, FROM BEYOND, et. al., has embarked from the dark world of H.P. Lovecraft to the equally-dark visual world of Japanese manga-author Yoshiki Takaya, creator of the serialized *Bio-Booster Armored Guyver* (Kyòshoku Soko Gaibà), appearing in *Shonen Captain* magazine. Since I have yet to see the animated GUYVER films from Bandai/Emotion Video, or been able to read the comics, I must rely solely on the film unspooled before me, on its own terms [read the review of GUYVER OVA Vol. 1 in our *Shorttakes* section—ed.].

Photos © 1991 Guyver Prod.

The Guyver stalks his enemies (opposite); Mark Hamill as Max (before and after) the " monster-cooking" process.





I found the new GUYVER movie to be a "poor man's ROBOCOP," with bland characters, corny dialog, violence, a low budget, limited sets, campiness—without clever satire, and a dark overall mood helmed by director "Screaming Mad George." The only positive aspect of this silly film are the monster/transformation spfx and the battle sequences—vibrantly directed by Steve Wang. The film, to my understanding, was produced by a company which specializes in spfx—that's all they do—and the film looks exactly like that; a film made by a special effects team, with no professional writer, director, or actor on board.

The film starts out with the opening titles which roll off into the distance, ala STAR WARS, and Mark Hamill is credited as the star, but in reality is nothing more than an audience "draw," and plays second fiddle to Jack Armstrong, an unknown actor who transforms into the "Guyver." In the L.A. wash, a location *nobodys ever seen before*, an elderly Japanese scientist is being chased by a pursuing van. He is carrying a briefcase containing the Guyver Ball (the rolled-up suit), and in desperation, plays the old switcharoo, removes the Guyver from the case and depositing it in a dark corner, and continues to run with the empty case. The van finally corners him, and three villains get out (Michael Barryman from THE HILLS HAVE EYES, Jimmy "J.J." Walker from GOOD TIMES, and Spice Williams from STAR TREK V) and take the briefcase. These strange characters are from a secret organization, bent on world domination (again?), called "Kronos." They are shocked when the Guyver isn't inside, and suddenly the Japanese scientist turns into a "Zoanoid" monster to fight off his attackers. J.J. turns into a wise-cracking creature which resembles one of Joe Dante's "Gremlins," Spice turns into a giant chicken, and Barryman transforms as well, and finally, their boss "Vaulkas" (David Gale from REANIMATOR) gets out of the van and transforms into something like the "Predator." They kill the scientist, as an alcoholic bum looks on in amazement, staring from his bottle to the monsters and then back again (have we seen this old joke before?).

Meanwhile back in Karate class, Sean, a young blonde-haired man, who looks like he'd rather be riding waves in Malibu, does Karate chops as his Asian girlfriend Mizuki [played by Vivian Woo, from THE LAST EMPEROR and SHADOW OF CHINA—ed.] (who can't act her way out of a paper bag) looks on. Police Inspector Max (an aged and mustached Mark Hamill), enters and takes the girl aside; he tells her that her father has been killed, but to the audience's amazement, her emotional reaction and "crying" is right out of Acting 101—unbelievable. Sean sees Max take Mizuki away, and follows. At the scene of the murder, Mizuki identifies the body, as Sean secretly watches from a high wall. Behind the wall, he finds the Guyver Ball and sticks it in his backpack. Several boring scenes later, filled with crappy acting, and a senseless monster murder at Mizuki's apartment, our leading man is attacked in a dark alley by a gang, the "ball" gets stuck on his face, and he transforms into the Guyver. The transformation scene is very well done, with whip-like vines shooting all over his body, covering him completely, and then armor plates appearing. This scene reminded me of John Carpenter's THE THING. When the Guyver is finally transformed, jets of exhaust fly out of it's "mouth," and sword-like blades pop out of it's elbows. Needless to say, the Guyver beats up the gang, and afterwards Sean is amazed at his metamorphosis (just like all superheroes after their first experience as that superhero!).

Later, Sean and Max have to rescue Mizuki, who's been kidnapped by the three monsters [Godzilla, Rodan and Mothra?—ed.]. It's interesting to point out that we never see the monsters in their human forms again, and this is probably because the producers only had J.J. Walker, Spice and Barryman on a weekly contract, and couldn't afford to keep them throughout the entire picture. In a dark, large warehouse (which the movie is full of), Sean and Max manage to rescue the girl, and the chase is on—a gremlin, a chicken, and another creature pursue the three good guys through dark alleys in L.A. There is then a scene which totally destroys any credibility the film may have had, and that's when the camera shoots off frame into the production crew (a director is seen, a make-up man, gaffers, extras, the catering truck, etc.) and the main actors joke around. This scene was intended as a bit of comedy relief, but only confused the audience, and made the film more of a silly cartoon than anything else. In a showdown battle, the Guyver fights all three monster villains, but is "killed" by the boss monster, who keeps hitting the silver "bulb" on the Guyver's head—I assume it's like Superman's weakness to Kryptonite. Mizuki does a lousy job of crying again, and the villains take she and Max back to their headquarters—which, yes, looks like the interior of a dark warehouse.

At Kronos' H.Q., Vaulkas and Dr. East (Jeffery Combs from REANIMATOR), are making Zoanoids in big transparent tubes, and Max is put into one for monster-processing. In a spark of bravery, which is totally alien to her character, Mizuki pulls a gun on Vaulkas, frees Max, and takes back the "dead" Guyver which is in it's ball-form. When their escape is blocked, the Guyver magically comes back to life, and beats up the villains, which is the biggest hole in the script. After the place is wrecked, Max starts transforming into a giant spider because he was already half-cooked in the transformation tube, and the intended serious death scene is absolutely ridiculous, with Max gasping "you'll have to go on without me!" then he "croaks" literally. Vivian Wu's Acting 101 is demonstrated yet again, as she sheds a few glycerine tears for Max. Finally, the Monster Boss arrives like a crab/spider/octopus and he and Guyver have a big spectacular battle—which isn't too bad. Guess who wins? When Sean transforms back to his human form, for some apparent reason, he's completely naked (before he was wearing clothes), and Mizuki stares at his private parts with bulging eyes. Screaming Mad George must have written this scene, because a friend of mine, Doug Miller, who worked for George's spfx house told me that George had a giant sized latex penis and testicles displayed in his office, which would often offend visitors. At the very end of the film, Dr. East, along with J.J., threaten "we'll get the Guyver yet," leaving the end of the film open of course!

Give me Ultraman or Godzilla any day!•

William Winkler is a film producer and actor. He supervised and produced the Americanization of Tatsunoko Pro.'s 1973 animated SF/Hero teleseries, TEKKAMAN—THE SPACE KNIGHT (UCHU NO KISHI—TEKAMAN). We welcome him on board with us here at *Markalite*.

THE GUYVER. A Guyver Productions/Shochiku-Fuji Presentation. General release: Summer 1991. Based on the Story and Characters Created by Yoshiki Takaya. Producer: Brian Yuzuna. Director: Screaming Mad George. Action Director: Steve Wang. Cast: Jack Armstrong (Sean/The Guyver), Mark Hamill (Max), Vivian Wu (Mizuki), David Gale (Vaulkas), Jeffery Combs (Dr. East), Jimmy Walker, Micheal Barryman, Spice Williams, Linnea Quigely.

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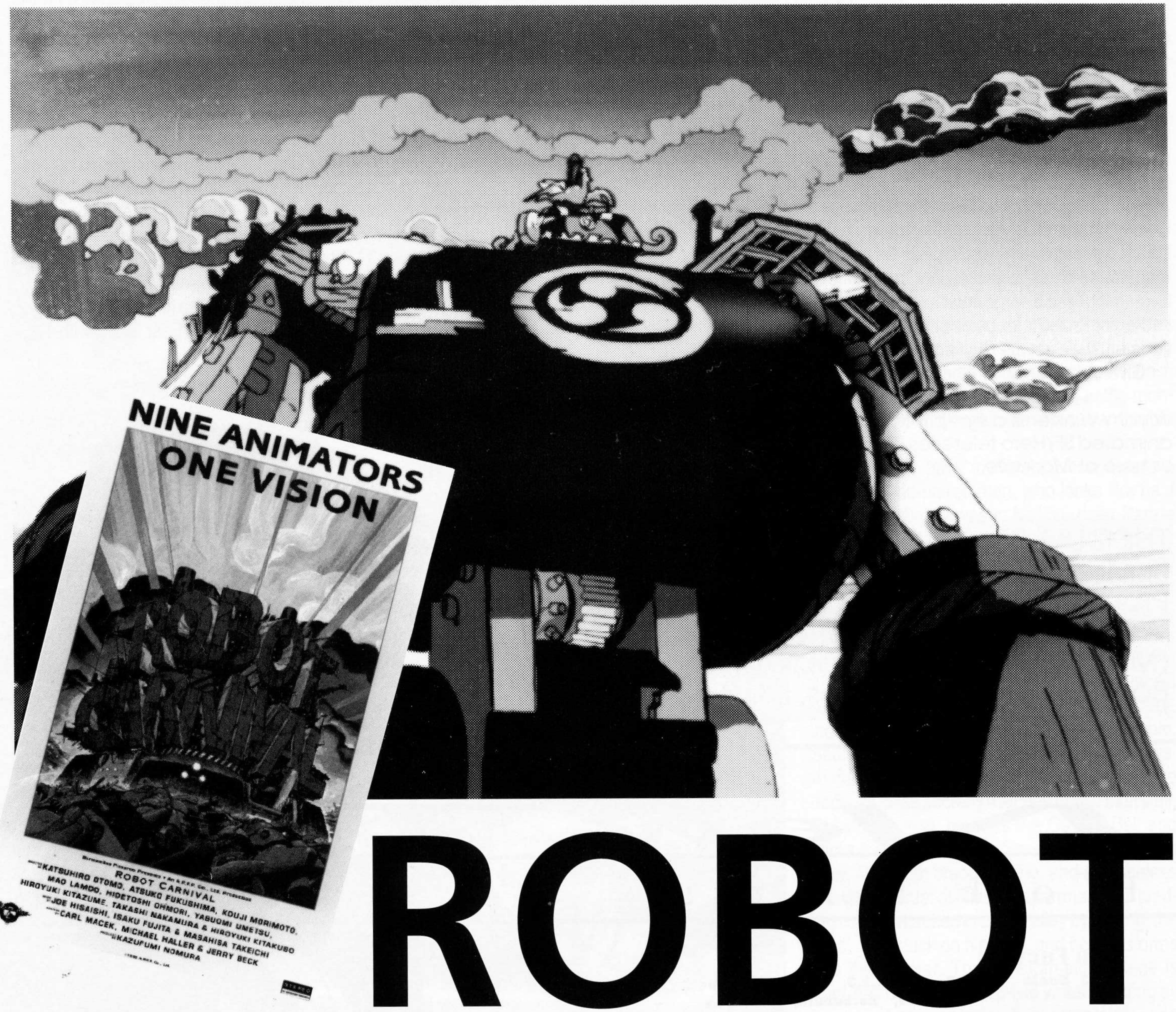
NINE ANIMATORS ONE VISION
ROBOT CARNIVAL
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HIROYUKI KITAZUME, TAKASHI NAKAMURA & HIROYUKI KITAKUBO
JOE HISAISHI, ISAKU FUJITA & MASAHISA TAKEICHI
CARL MACEK, MICHAEL HALLER & JERRY BECK
KAZUFUMI NOMURA

ROBOT

A film which proves that not all Japanimation is the

MIKE KURE

For the past few years, American Japanimation enthusiasts have had to settle for something less-than-ideal when it came to viewing an accurately translated, well-dubbed English-language version of their favorite animated feature from Nippon. Until very recently, quality English versions of these films were virtually nonexistent.

With the 1990s, a Los Angeles-based distribution company, Streamline Pictures, wisely noted the growing Japanese animation movement in the United States and being supporters of animation in general, and saw the potential success on the horizon for uncut, well-dubbed Japanimation in the English-language market. Streamline researched their market well, and chose to translate three films that would help show to Westerners that all Japanimation is not the same, in content, execution and style. Streamline's versions of LAPUTA—CASTLE IN THE SKY, AKIRA and LENSMAN, were all all respectful of their original counterparts by maintaining the "mature" level of the acting and storyline.

All of which bring us to ROBOT CARNIVAL. Anime fans across the U.S., and the world, for that matter, have become familiar with the wonders of this animated anthology film. Now, after the success of legitimate, English-language versions of AKIRA, LAPUTA and LENSMAN, Streamline Pictures has released the "English-language" version of ROBOT CARNIVAL. Of course, as many of you may already know, there isn't much dialogue in the in the original ROBOT CARNIVAL to begin with. Of the eight stories that comprise this anthology of robot tales, only two have spoken words.

ROBOT CARNIVAL was made in 1987 by long-time animation producer Kazufumi Nomura. His objective was to produce an animated feature about robots that teenagers and adults could enjoy, yet esoteric enough that a toy company would find it impossible to spin-off a line of character items from the film. Once his mission and audience were set, he hired eight filmmakers to help him realize his vision. The end result was what you saw (or will see) in ROBOT CARNIVAL. Though the film is not without flaws that hinder it as a whole, each segment is technically well-done and graced with some marvelous animation. Among the eight, there's not one segment that looks like the other. Each are so distinct in design and animation style that it pretty much trashes the common misconception that all Japanimation looks alike. With the segments that truly succeed, it gives off its own "feeling"—affecting your emotions and senses in a way that goes way beyond the merely visual.

The opening segment, "Introduction" by Katsuhiro Otomo, the internationally acclaimed manga-artist of AKIRA. This brief, pleasant piece establishes the idea that a carnival of robots is coming to town. And within this framework, the individual adventures begin:

"Franken's Gears" by Koji Morimoto, as the title implies, is a spin-off on the old Frankenstein legend. A mad scientist creates a monstrous patch-work robot. In the end, the scientist's efforts are for naught, as his creation literally brings his world crashing down on him. It's a nice "Man vs. Machine" parable, with each leading to the destruction of the other. However, in the end, this entire sequence is just one long build up to a rather abrupt ending.

Despite its shortcomings, this particular episode has a lot of nice touches. Serving as mood boosters are the sound effects and, of course, it's "look." This story takes place in some timeless era, and the materials made of stone and wood mixed in with the stuff of modern technology, gives it a neo-modern/primitive look. Enhanced by the lack of dialogue, muffled noises of what sounds like words, punctuate the background, giving an eerie effect. There's a lot of things going on at once, so "Franken's Gears" should not have any trouble holding your attention.

Hidetoshi Ohmori's "Deprive" is the second entry. Humans and robots live in peaceful coexistence until evil alien robots attack. The story abruptly changes p.o.v. and focuses on the abduction of one girl by the aliens. A human-like robot with super-strength fights for his life to save his human mistress. Guess who comes up victorious?

"Deprive" is simple standard superhero fare. I was looking for some degree of originality, but there was none. This episode is so weak, I'm surprized it even made it into the anthology. Don't misunderstand, there's nothing really "wrong" with this sequence. There's plenty of big guns and fast-paced action that you'd commonly find in most OVAs (original video animation) produced in Japan. But there's nothing special about it, and that's what killed it for me.

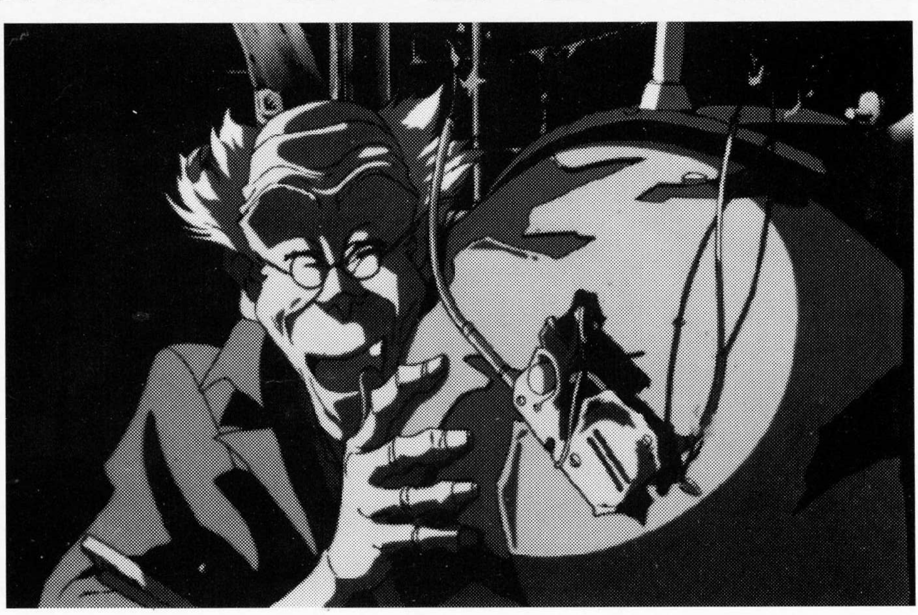
"Presence" by Yasuomi Umetsu is the first episode that contains dialogue, and is also one of the highlights of ROBOT CARNIVAL. Spanning several years and told in three stages of time, here we have a tragic love story about a young well-to-do family man who creates a beautiful android and then destroys her because of love.

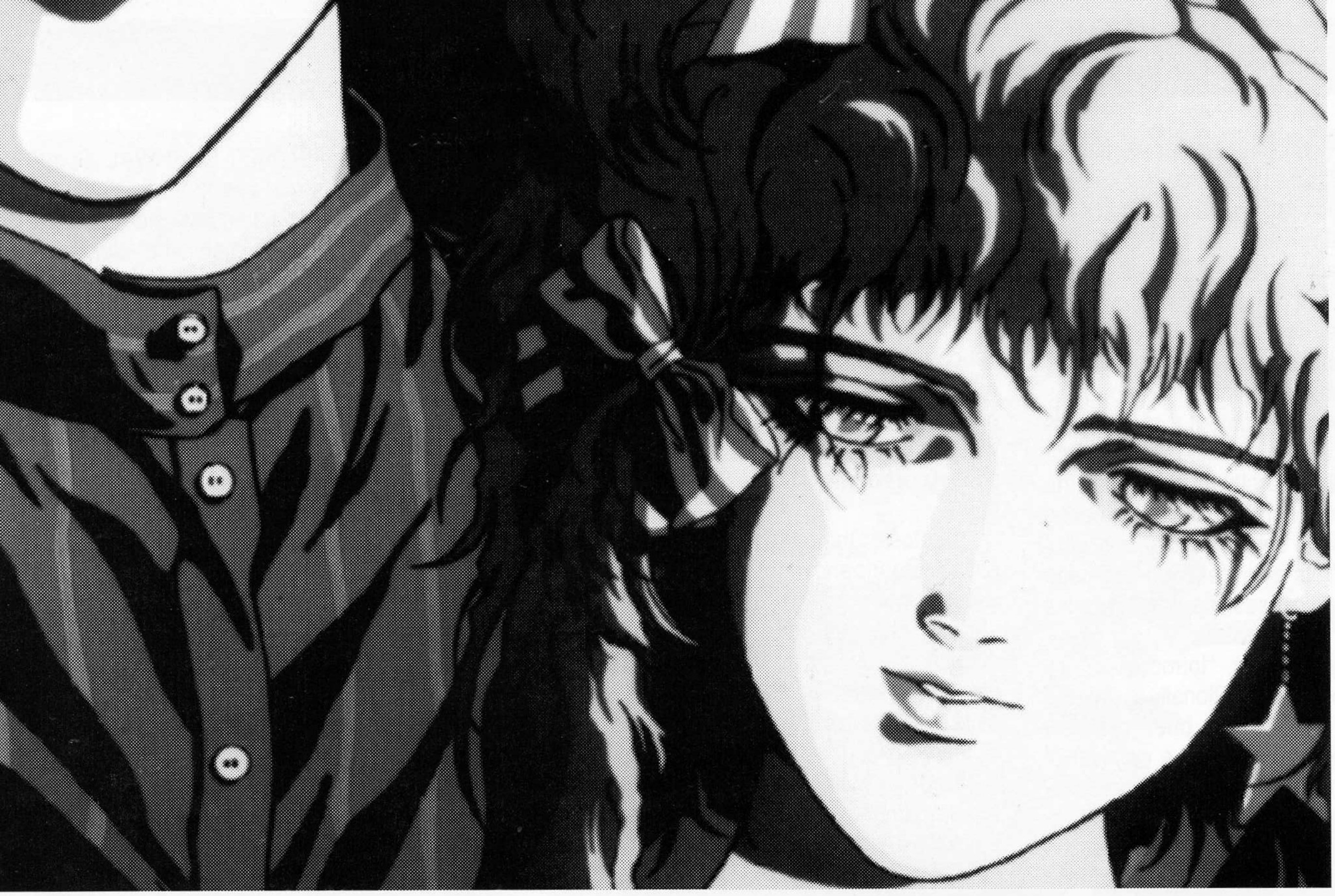
Originally hired to make robots as human as possible, the young man did his job only too well. In time, real humans came to resent the robots, and the government forbade the further manufacturing of these artificial beings. Growing discontent with his comfortable life and perhaps bored by his beautiful wife and daughter, the young man builds one last robot—a young, capricious female programmed only to obey him. Storing her in a secret place, the young man is pleased by his companion's inquisitiveness. The relationship developed by the two is sincere—nothing lewd or illicit. But once again, he does his job too well, for though the robot was meant to serve as someone to talk to, to teach and share experiences with, the robot develops the ability to think independently and soon expresses love for her creator. It is this realization of the impossible which forces the man to destroy his wonderful creation, whom he has come to love so much—the consequences of which will haunt him for the rest of his days.

This is truly one of the gems of ROBOT CARNIVAL and can be used as a great example to show non-anime fans what the big deal is all about. It was "directed" in the same manner as any good live-action film. Especially evocative

CARNIVAL

same.

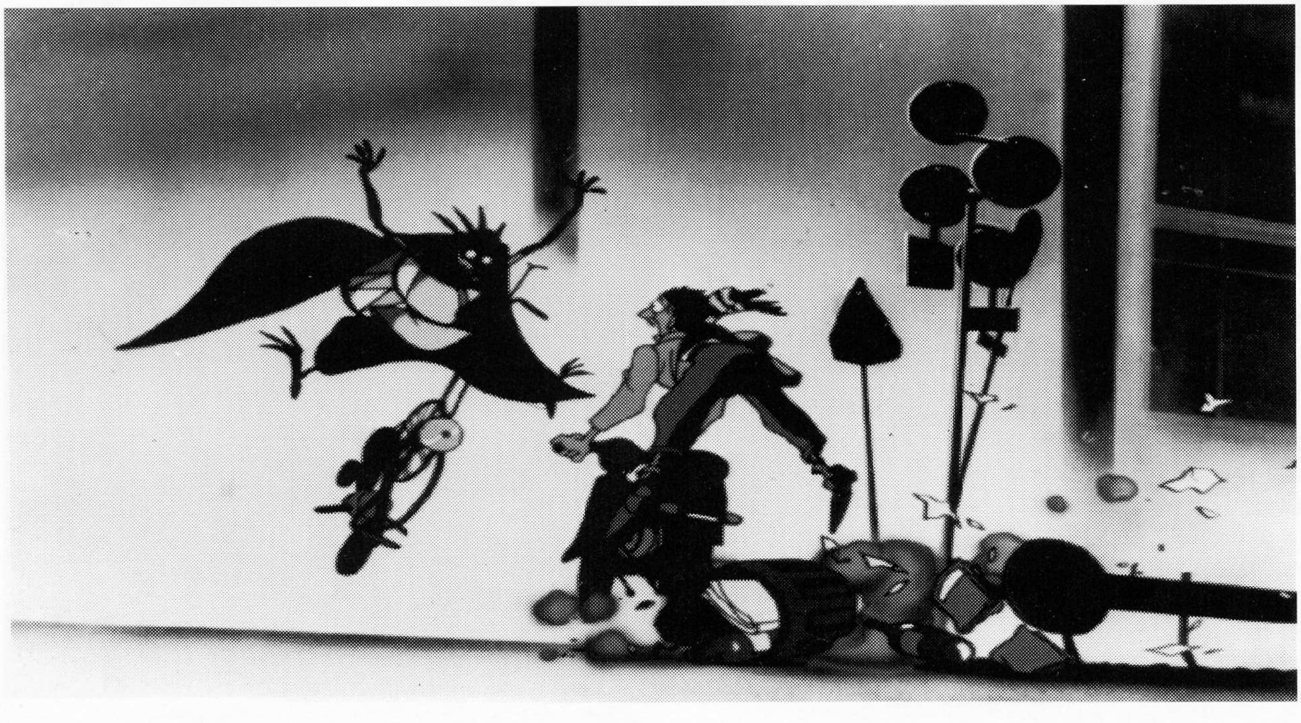


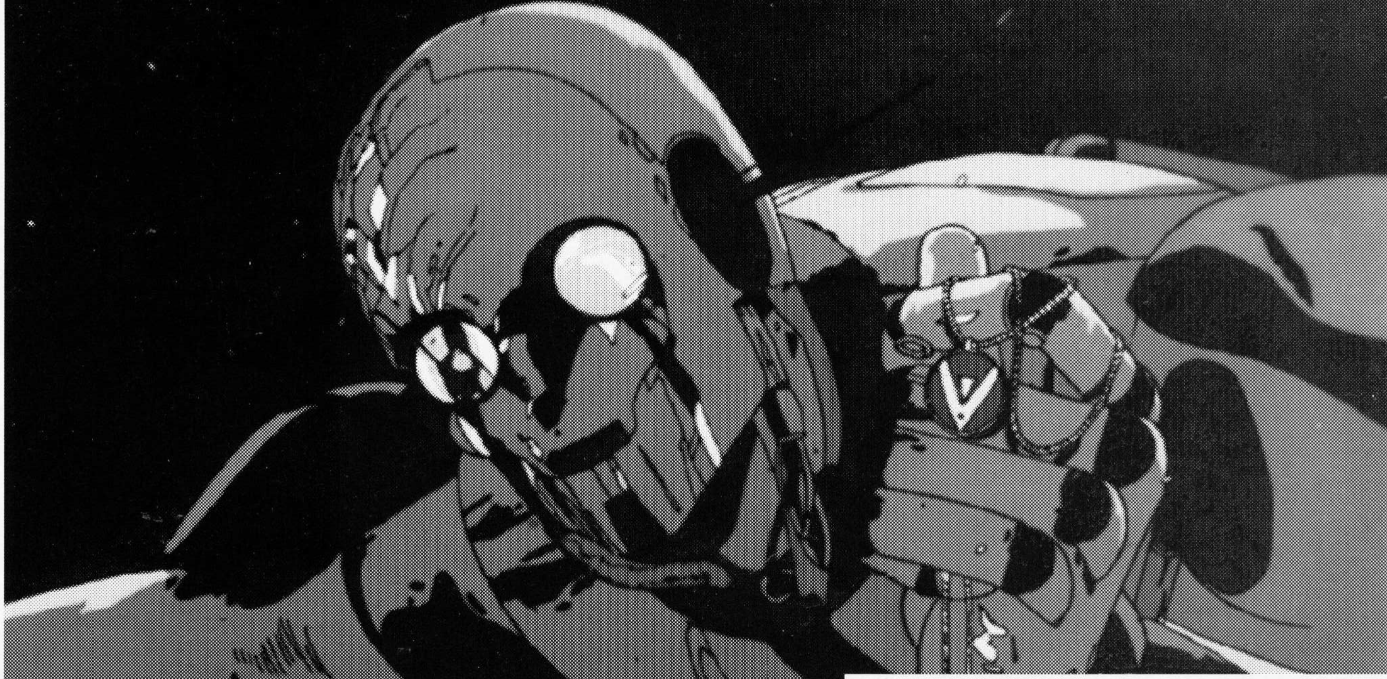


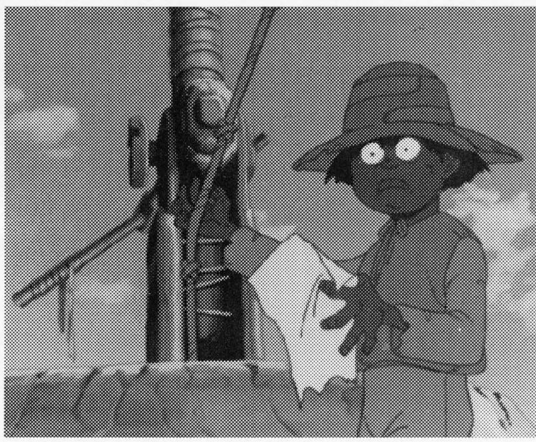
were the silent close-ups or long shots that were used to effectively build up the emotion of a scene. It's truly amazing how powerful just a simple look or smile from one of these animated characters can be. Everything from the direction to the music makes "Presence" shine.

The forth installment is "Starlight Angel." A teenage girl suffers from a broken heart at an amusement park and finds solace in the company of robot attendant. After a fanciful, then dangerous adventure, the girl discovers her new mechanical companion to actually be a good-looking human hunk just dressed as a robot! Uh-huh! This is an all-show, no-go episode that's rather unfulfilling. Hiroyuki Kitazume's style here will be recognized by anime fans, and from what is demonstrated in this segment, I'm sure that his followers will not be disappointed. But there's nothing about "Starlight Angel" that makes it interesting. Kitazume may draw great looking girls, but that's not enough. The segment seemed longer than it actually was. I wonder why. When you procure your video tape of ROBOT CARNIVAL and you want to fast-forward through this one, go right ahead.

Just when you are about to give up on the film because of the fluff like "Deprive" and "Starlight Angel", comes something that makes everything so far worthwhile. Segment five, "Clouds", is what makes ROBOT CARNIVAL memorable. Directed by Mao Lamdo is about a little robot boy's awakening to the wonders of nature. Presented in delicate black and white line drawings, it is a languid, dreamy sequence enhanced by a new-age musical background. The beauty of "Clouds" is in its simplicity—the little robot walks







along as clouds go by, transforming into various shapes. But it is not only the clouds that transform, for the boy is also changed by his experience. At first, the little robot walks alone, as an outsider. But by journey's end, he has become a child of the world. "Clouds" is sheer poetry, told without a single word. It is a masterpiece.

"A Tale of Two Robots" by Hiroyuki Kitakubo, is a neat little pop-tale that has been viewed as a parable of sorts; some have called it a parody of Japanese WWII propaganda cartoons. Maybe. Others saw this as a thinly disguised commentary on the current view many Japanese hold on America's diplomatic bullying their country into submission. But me, I see this episode as a satire on the high-tech robot shows in Japan versus the low-tech versions made here. Well, whatever the case, it's light-hearted and fun.

This time, the battle between East and West appears to take place in 19th Century Tokyo (then called Edo). The Japanese robot is decked out in samurai gear (but kind of winds up looking like a Go Nagai robot), while the Western robot comes off as an American Civil War figure. (Actually, the Western robot reminded me of the robot "Mogera" from THE MYSTERIANS.) The heroic young Japanese pilot and his loyal crew put their primitive giant robot against an equally primitive invading robot controlled by an arrogant old Westerner. He believes that it is his creation that is the better robot, while the Japanese think otherwise. To prove their point, the two robots go head to head, pretty much destroying themselves and everything around them. The destruction of the robots are caused not so much by the fighting, but more so due to the clumsiness of their respective human pilots.

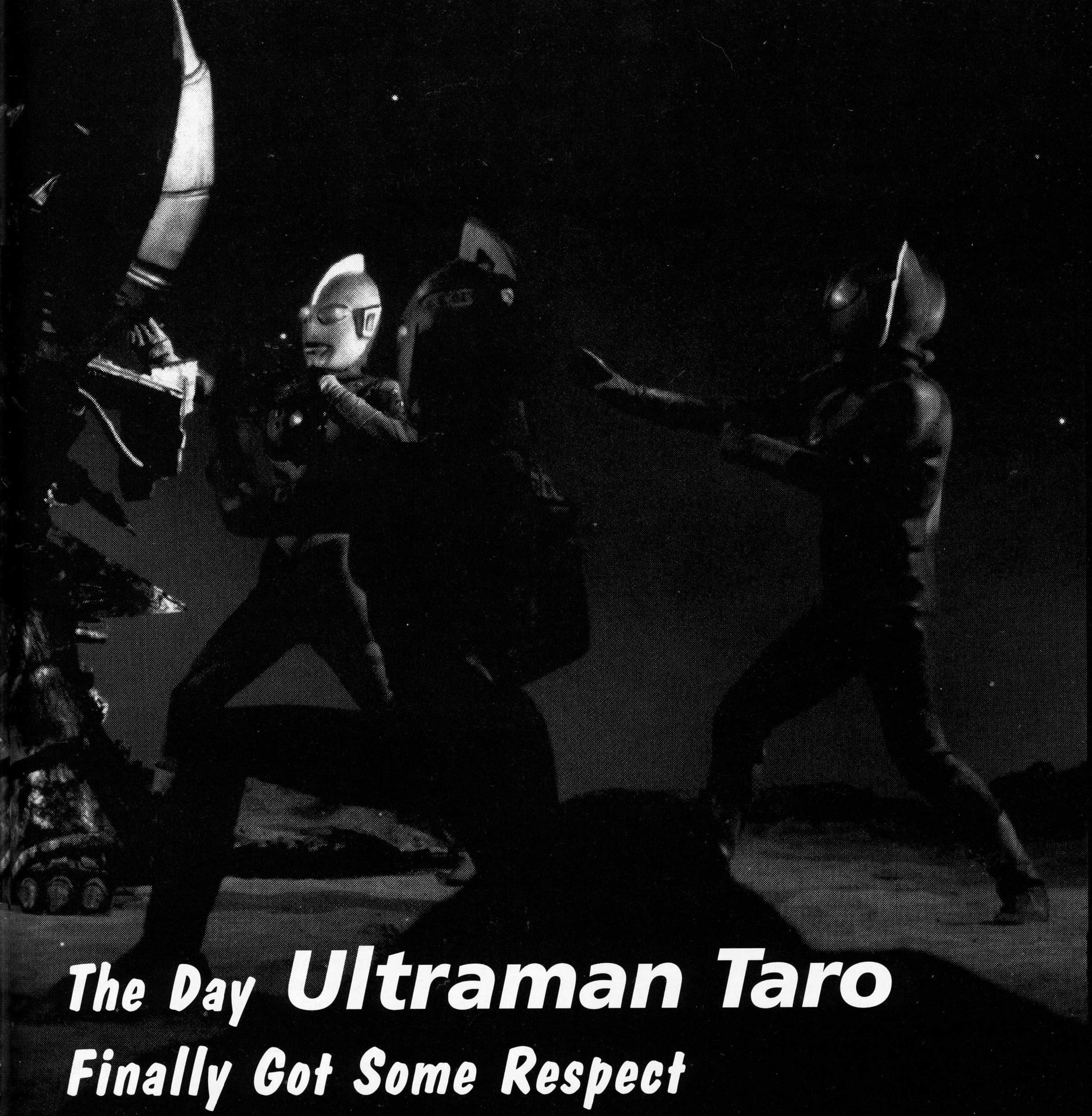
This episode is packed with dialogue. Oddly enough, Streamline chose to have the Japanese characters come off rather stereotypically by having them speak in stilted English, which was a little irritating.

Finally, there's "Nightmare" by Takashi Nakamura. I heard it said that critics have compared this to the "Night On Bald Mountain" sequence in Walt Disney's FANTASIA. Animation-wise, this segment certainly ranks as one of the best in ROBOT CARNIVAL. But before anyone gets too excited, "Nightmare" owes a lot to "Night On Bald Mountain" only in the sense that it borrowed the plot from it. The basis of "Nightmare" is indeed similar to "Mountain"; as night falls over technology-driven Tokyo, the machines literally awaken, no longer hampered by the limitations placed on them by Man. The machines go crazy, performing an orgy of demolition and reconstruction throughout the sleeping city. One human, being in the wrong place at the right time, witnesses the mechanical madness. And thus, becomes the target of the monster machines and must run for his life. He is saved, as is Man's city, by the break of dawn. As in FANTASIA, the start of a new day sends these demons back to their hiding places, and everything is as it was before nightfall. Except for one thing…

Streamline Pictures plans on releasing their English language version of ROBOT CARNIVAL on video, directly to comic specialty shops for six months, before general retail release. If you are a fan of animation, don't miss attending this wonderful carnival.•

ROBOT CARNIVAL (ROBOTO KÀNIBAURU). An A.P.P.P. Co., Ltd. Production. Executive Producer: Kazufumi Nomura. Music: Joe Hisashi, Isaku Fujita and Masahisa Takeuchi. Segment Directors: Katsuhiro Otomo, Atsuko Fukushima, Koji Morimoto, Mao Lamdo, Hideyoshi Ohmori, Yasuomi Umetsu, Hiroyuki Kitazume, Takahashi Nakamura and Hiroyuki Kitakubo. English Adaptation: Carl Macek, Micheal Haller and Jerry Beck (Streamline Pictures). Released 1987 (Japan)/1991 (U.S.).

THE ULTRAMAN STORY



The Day Ultraman Taro Finally Got Some Respect

BOB JOHNSON

The sixth in a series of "Ultra" programs, ULTRAMAN TARO (1973-74), was (reportedly) the most expensively produced show of the Ultra Series. This showed in many of the earlier episodes, but towards the middle of the series, it did not look like there was much a budget left at all!

The monsters and scripts were fairly silly at times, and at others, they were down right ludicrous—but this did not stop TARO from being very popular in Japan at the time, running stronger than better written, serious superhero dramas of the time (MIRRORMAN, SILVER MASK, FIREMAN).

After TARO came ULTRAMAN LEO; and it was five years before ULTRAMAN 80 appeared, which was a big improvement. But then, Tsuburaya Pro. stopped there. As the last "Shoowat!" was echoing in the ears of Ultrafans, Tsuburaya hung up its monster suits and gave the Ultrabrothers a rest.

Tsuburaya, prompted by several ill-fated attempts at original Ultraman movie projects, finally pulled some financing out of Shochiku/Fuji for an original feature, and set down to produce "The Ultraman Story" (Urutoraman Monogatari). A concept which centers on the life of Ultraman Taro.

The film opens with the same music produced for the animated ADVENTURES OF ULTRAMAN film—composed for episodes of THE ULTRAMAN (available in the U.S. from F.H.E. Video), performed by the Los Angeles Symphony Orchestra. After the great "vastness of space" opening credits, we see Taro as a child, looking down upon the "Land of Light" from a cliff. The Land of Light certainly has had a facelift since the TARO TV series! And for the better!

We witness Taro growing into a young man, learning how to fight, shoot rays, and study to be an Ultrabrother, with little success. Finally, Ultra Father takes Taro under his wing, to teach him in the ways of discipline in becoming an Ultrabrother. On a huge video screen, he watches library footage of Ultraman, Ultra Seven, New Ultraman (called "Ultraman Jack" in the film. Tsuburaya has gone back to "New," as "Jack" didn't go over well—ed.), and Ultraman Ace, fighting various beasties. Taro learns techniques in offense, defense, telepathy, and how to react in other-worldly dimensions. These fights occur via the use of stock footage of such classic battles with some of the most deadly and famous of the Ultra Monsters.

Ultra Father alerts Taro that Earth is threatened, and sends the young Ultraman to defend our world (this is supposedly where the ULTRAMAN TARO teleseries takes place). Meanwhile, the Ultrabrothers are engaged elsewhere with alien Hiporito, who manages to beat them, until the timely intervention of Ultra Father—but during the rescue of his "sons," he is mortally wounded. The Ultrabrothers return him to M78. Taro returns to join them.

While Taro is busy training, the evil space emperor, "Judah," begins his siege on the Earth with Enmahgo, the King of Hell, while at the same time, sending his master mecha-creation "Grandking" (a robot-monster which is part Gahora, part Baltan, and part several others) in an attempt to enter the vicinity of the Ultramen's homeworld, in a plan to destroy the Land of Light. Ultra Father, now conscious, orders the older brothers into the fray against the metal marauder, and the young Ultraman to the Milky Way. Taro rushes to the rescue of the humans on Earth...

As the fledgling Ultrabrother battles Enmahgo to save our world (courtesy of more stock footage), Grandking engages the the other Ultrabrothers in an interstellar dogfight. Eventually, they manage to lure the monster away from the Land of Light, and onto an abandoned planet. Back on the Earth, Taro has finally defeated the King of Hell, and flies off to join his comrades against the overwhelming strength of Grandking. And so, this sets the stage for the final battle!

Grandking proves to be the Ultrabrothers strongest enemy, nearly wearing them out, even when Taro returns to join them. Ultra Mother suggests that they all merge to form one supreme Ultrabeing—in this way, Grandking is soon soundly defeated. Judah promises the Ultramen that he will be back (and he does, in the ANDRO-MELOS vidseries), peace reigns again, and the universe is safe once more.

The film (in video release, Japan only) is definitely worth checking out, for all interested in the background of the Ultra-legend. It was directed by veteran spfx-man Koichi Takano, whose effects work on this production is very well handled. And the suits! They look great! Ultraman looks almost as he did in his original (1966) series, as do the rest of the "brothers." Grandking really comes across as formidable; no one Ultrabrother could have defeated the monstrosity alone. On the deserted planet's surface, Grandking releases a number of deadly beams and a variety of rays that keep the Ultramen jumping as if they were in a "Kamen Rider" movie.

The selection of stock footage is really a mixed bag at best—there are some classic confrontations, which I mentioned earlier, but also we have some regrettably sad-looking sequences. Mostly these are from the latter episodes of the original ULTRAMAN TARO. The two that readily come into mind are the hero's battles with "Mephiras" and "Eleking"—Mephiras looks terrible! I can't emphasize this more than enough. All of the details that made the original suit (created by the late master suit-maker, Ryosaku Takayama) in ULTRAMAN, look so terrific, are gone. The suit looks as though it is old and decaying—even though it was new—and the end result is nothing more than just another rubber suit. As for Eleking, he doesn't fair much better, either; the long tail, which was his trademark, is missing—the redesigned tail is far too short, about the size of a normal monster's, not long enough to wrap around a miniature tree, let alone an adversary like Ultraman Taro. And, as with most of TARO's monsters, Eleking no longer fires out death-rays—he breaths fire! The optical technicians at Den Film Effects, must have been pretty hungry in those days! I almost expected 'ol Mephiras to belch out a fireball! These are problems of the old TARO TV series are unfortunately included in the new movie. Fans of ULTRAMAN and ULTRA SEVEN should probably just fast-scan over these scenes.

One thing missing from Hirano's script for THE ULTRAMAN STORY, breaking series tradition, is a Science Patrol, Ultra Garrison, MAT, or whatever. Also missing are their jets, tanks, guns, outlandish cars, and people. There is not a single human soul in the entire movie, just monsters and Ultrabeings—all in costume. So, anyone bored with watching the first 97% of a typical "Ultra Series" episode, and can't wait for the last 3%, where the hero comes out and trashes the monster of the week, this movie is for you! And for those of you who are interested in the plight of the human characters, or fans of the "science patrols"—sorry.

The sets design utilized in the production is fairly well conceived and realized; the art direction is simple, minimalistic—but the sets are well lit, and photographed with style. The miniature set of the battleground—the deserted planet—is the best example of this: the lighting is wonderful, bringing out the details in colored lights, while also hiding the set's flaws and giving the planet a very alien appearance—making an interesting setting for the climactic battle. The color photography and optical effects are beautifully shot; under the veteran talents of Koichi Takano, these elements, all combined, make for interesting viewing.

All in all, THE ULTRAMAN STORY, though not a blockbuster (and I'm not sure how well it would fare in stateside theaters), is a lot of fun and well worth watching (if you can locate a video tape of it at your local "Japantown"). It nearly makes up for the blasphemies of the original TARO vidseries, and rewrites the mythos into a more respectable format. A highly entertaining adventure, that reaches from a sense of wonder all the way to Nebula M78.

SHOOWAT! •

THE ULTRAMAN STORY (URUTORAMAN SUTORI). Released 7/14/1984 by Shochiku/Fuji. Produced by Tsuburaya Productions. Created and Planned by Noburo Tsuburaya. Executive Producers: Noburo Tsuburaya and Kiyotaka Ugawa. Screenplay: Yasushi Hirano. Research: Koichiro Fujishima and Masumi Kaneda. Music: Tsuburaya Music Publishing, Inc.. Music Producers: Shizuka Tamagawa and Kunio Miyauchi. Music Composed by Toru Fuyuki and Shunsuke Kikuchi. Photography: Takeshi Yamamoto (Toho Eizo). Lighting: Kenji Ushiba. Art Direction: Shiyun Yamaguchi and Tsuneo Kantake. Assistant Direction: Kenichi Uraoka. Director: Koichi Takano.

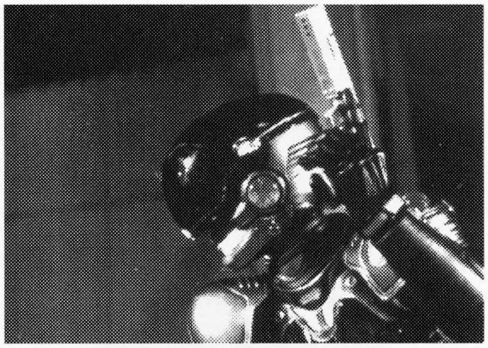
Short TAKES

ShortTakes is a regular feature in Markalite, bringing you reviews of the latest and not so latest in Fantasy, Horror and SF from the Land of the Rising Sun

LADY BATTLECOP

Toei cops out

Damon Foster



Hello and welcome! How thoughtful of you to take time out of your busy day to read this review! The review is in regards to Toei's new made-for-video science fictioner, LADY BATTLECOP. This generic movie wins my award for the ultimate, most blatant rip-off of ROBOCOP, even beating Toei's JIBAN, WINSPECTOR, SOLBRAIN, Hong Kong's ROBOFORCE (aka I LOVE MARIA), and our own SUPER FORCE. Methinks LADY BATTLECOP is the most predictable, blandest of them all. The only thing LADY BATTLECOP has going for it is that it's funner than GUNHED, but then, cleaning a toilet without a brush is more fun than GUNHED. To all you fans of LADY BATTLECOP (both of you), keep in mind that this is just my opinion, but then, I know more and think more clearly than virtually anyone.

Lack of originality, creativity and entertainment value aside, BATTLECOP does have its positive aspects, like the fact that it's just a video and that nobody forces us to watch it at gunpoint. I also was mildly impressed by some of the production values like cinematography, editing, special effects and when Japanese actors speak in broken, I mean fractured English. Just listen to the villainous Masashi Ishibashi's (aka Milton Ishibashi) hilarious attempts at slang in his death scene! Getting back to the fx, they're decent, but not much better than those in the average half-hour-episode superhero TV show from Toei (JETMAN, SOLBRAIN, or whatever else Japanese spoiledbratdom is watching this week), making this mock blockbuster seem quite obsolete. All I figure is that them Toei guys got tired of doing exclusively kiddie TV shows and quickly cranked out their first "adult" superhero adventure. Even the score sounds like reject music, taken from the cutting room floor of whoever the hell did the score for KAMEN RIDER BLACK. Getting back to its so-called *adult* characteristics, the flick has a little more bloodshed than average for a kiddie program, and even implies a rape scene, though a non-explicit one. The worst production value is the film's action staging, or lack of it. Now that big-shots like Sonny Chiba don't always do all the stunt choreography, the Japan Action Club (JAC) should be called JBC (Japan Boredom Club). Hard to believe that this is the same JAC responsible for action classics like the 1970s Kamen Rider series, 1982's SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN teleseries, and even martial arts extravaganzas like ROARING FIRE and THE EXECUTIONER. Oh well, JAC's work on TV hero programs is still enjoyable, so they haven't completely become victims of boring-old-fart-syndrome yet.

The futuristic setting is Neo Tokyo, in an area where crime is commonplace, and so is bad acting. The massive international crime syndicate Cartel is run by businessmen who've hired a gang of coldblooded mercenaries called Team Phantom to go around shooting anyone they dislike, such as rival mobs of yakuza, or scientists working on the BattleCop project. Also at the disposal of Cartel is a super powered criminal called Amadeus. The villains attack a laboratory where there are two more supporting characters, scientist Naoya Koizumi and his girlfriend Kaoru (Azusa Nakamura) who become all bloodied up when the corrupt soldiers raid their laboratory. To get revenge, Kaoru eventually becomes the robotic BattleCop by wearing the high-tech combat suit they'd been working on at the time of the villainous attack. Eventually, one-by-one, this female Robocop locates and kills all the soldiers in a series of uninteresting confrontations. She later goes up against that weird genetic mutation Amadeus (a muscleman with magical powers) after it kills Koizumi. For the not-so-grand finale, she goes up to the office building where the Cartel yakuzas hang out, only to discover that they'd saved her the trouble of killing them by using the gun-to-the-head method. Again, thanks for reading this review; your presence here has made this a truly festive occasion.•

LADY BATTLECOP (ONNA BATORUKOPU). Produced by: Toei Video, Tohokushinsha and Sega Enterprises. Director: Akihisa Okamoto. Action Director: Osamu Kenta (JAC). Special Effects: Nobuo Yajima (Special Effects Research, Inc.). Written by: Hayaichi Miyashita. Visual Supervisor/Character Design: Keita Amamiya. Special Makeup Effects: Art/make Toki. Starring Masaru Matsuda, Shiro Sano, Masashi Ishibashi and Azusa Nakamura. Running time: 81 mins.; Stereo Hi-Fi/TM01079/¥14,307

GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE

Check out the spfx scenes!

Noriaki Ikeda

In Japan, the film had SRO audiences on the first two days of its release in December of 1989, and it deserves to be congratulated. Director Kazuki Omori's promise, that he would deliver a highlight in this movie every ten minutes, was kept. The only weak point comes after Godzilla collapses—the direction of

the story and spfx lose their momentum, and it changes the tense mood that the entire movie had had to that point. The psychic girl should have said, "Godzilla will return to the Sea of Japan: his anger is alleviated." What ever happened to the plan to prevent Godzilla from attacking the nuclear power plants, according to the story? The direction at the conclusion, which resulted in a drastic shifting of the atmosphere, is regrettable—both the vision of Yasuko Sawauchi and the rose in space are too abrupt. At the very least, I wanted them to use these visions for something along the lines of a delusion that Dr. Shiragami witnesses before he dies.

Godzilla's fight with the ships in Uraga Channel is fabulous. The shots of the attacking helicopters are great, and the spfx in the big pool were very bright and energetic; this showed us a powerful Godzilla, which we haven't seen in quite some time. If the filmmakers showed us some scenes within the control towers of the ships and the crew of the helicopters, it would have been perfect. It was fun to see the intercutting of real action of the ships' guns and spfx shots. Hopefully, the filmmakers will improve this technique from this starting point, to decrease the awkwardness of these scenes.

The Pan-Down on Biollante in Lake Ashino to the people observing him, is a great composite that has astonished spfx fans; 70mm film was used as a composite base. This technical challenge, tackled by cameraman Kenichi Eguchi and spfx director Koichi Kawakita, resulted in a wonderful image.

The reason why the destruction of Osaka seems to be so powerful, is that it is a victory achieved through: camera focus, movement, placement, the composites with live footage, achieving facial expression in each cut through lighting, a good process for flames using propane, and very active shooting. In GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH, the destructive and fearful image will be several times greater if they add scenes of people fleeing in panic from the unexpected arrival of Godzilla or Ghidorah. Because of the angle of BIOLLANTE's story, they didn't achieve this, but with GHIDORAH, I expect the filmmakers to take a second step—monsters appearing in a large city where people live. Showing the masses flowing into the underground malls, followed by severe cracks appearing on the ceilings, sporatic lighting, and then the ceilings collapsing… this is how a monster movie *should* be. It's regrettable that we cannot feel the living presence of Osaka's inhabitants in this movie.

You might remember in BIOLLANTE the image of the monster's nuclear flames tearing the surface of the sea asunder. I want to support this new tendency in the treatment of the Godzilla film as not only a serious monster movie—but also as great entertainment.•

GOJIRA TAI BEOLANTE (Toho, 1989). Written/Directed by Kazuki Omori. Special Effects Director: Koichi Kawakita. Running Time: 105 minutes. Toho Video (Dolby Surround Sound). VHS: TG4100 (¥6,000). LD: TLL2174 (¥6,180)

DEVILMAN: Chapters 1 & 2

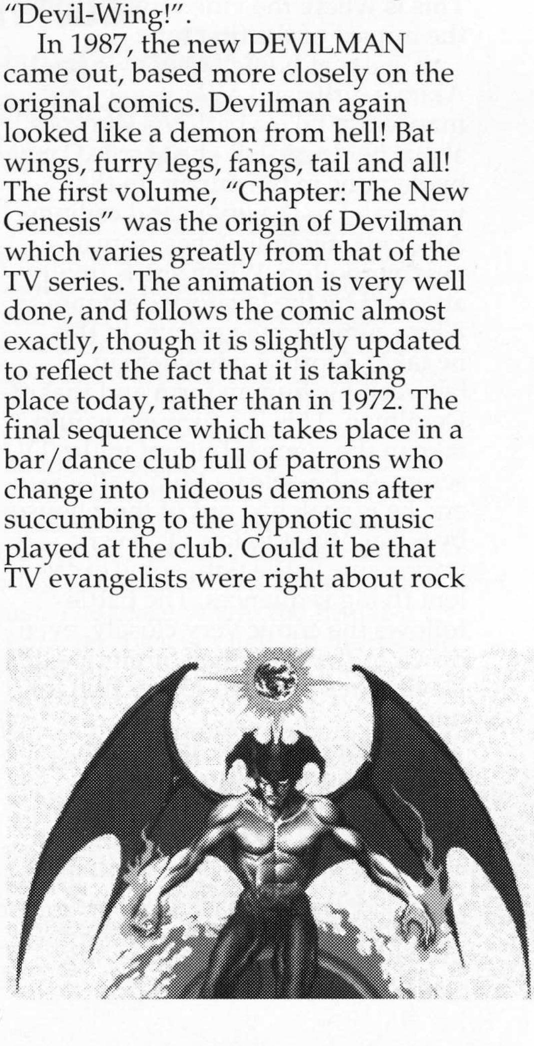
Animated gore at its best!

Bob Johnson

In 1972, comic artist Go Nagai started serializing DEVILMAN, a new creation, in *Shonen Jump* magazine. The comic involved a youth named Akira Fudo, who finds out about a plot by demons to take over the world, and becomes a devil to battle them on their own terms. The art and story were extremely violent and gory, as only Go Nagai can depict it. Arms were routinely ripped off, heads severed, intestines spilled and hearts ripped. The demons themselves were some of the strangest creations ever dreamed up.

When the series was adapted into a TV show by Toei, a lot of the gore was toned down, and much was left in. Devilman himself was more of a superhero than a demon. Instead of furry legs and clawed feet, he had red trunks and toeless feet. Instead of bat wings, he had bright red wings which looked more suited for Mazinger Z (who he would later costar with in a theatrical short). Also, as was the trend of the time, he would scream out his weapons "Devil-Cutter!", "Devil-Arrow!", "Devil-Wing!".

In 1987, the new DEVILMAN came out, based more closely on the original comics. Devilman again looked like a demon from hell! Bat wings, furry legs, fangs, tail and all! The first volume, "Chapter: The New Genesis" was the origin of Devilman which varies greatly from that of the TV series. The animation is very well done, and follows the comic almost exactly, though it is slightly updated to reflect the fact that it is taking place today, rather than in 1972. The final sequence which takes place in a bar/dance club full of patrons who change into hideous demons after succumbing to the hypnotic music played at the club. Could it be that TV evangelists were right about rock



music containing the Devil's message? Anyway, when confronted by all these ghouls, Akira's latent devilish tendencies come to the surface and he becomes Devilman! What follows is one of the bloodiest fights you'll ever see in an animated video! The entire scene is one you will not soon forget. To emphasize this, it is accompanied by driving organ music which fits the demonic scene perfectly.

Volume #2, entitled "Chapter: Demon-Bird Siren", starts off where the first ended. Akira's friend, Ryo Tobeshima, who took him to the demonic-disco in the first volume, is in the hospital recovering from the wounds he suffered in the bloody battle. "Siren" is actually made up of two stories. The first takes Devilman into the sewers to battle a turtle-demon whose shell is made up of the faces of its victims. The second, which takes up the majority of the episode, is Devilman's classic battle with Siren, a female demon with giant bird wings on her head and arms and legs like bird claws. This is where the video lives up to the impact of the first tape.

It starts at home, where we see Akira's girlfriend Miki trying to innocently take a bath. As she goes about her business, she is spied on by demons in the mirror, in the water and in the floors and ceilings. All along, Siren watches from a nearby rooftop. When she is finally attacked by the lavatory demons, Akira comes to the rescue. In this, he takes a form somewhere in between his human form and that of Devilman. This is a form he would take in the comics, but not in the TV series. As he defeats Miki's attackers, he is snatched out of their house by Siren. What follows is a very impressive battle with some excellent flying sequences. The battle follows the comic very closely, even down to the end when Siren rips off Devilman's arm and leaves him for dead.

The quality of the animation, especially during the air battles gives the viewer a definite impression of a fight taking place miles above the city. Also, as Devilman and the Siren fly in and around buildings and through city streets, the camera follows at a dizzying pace.

The eerie organ music, by Kenji Kawai, used so well in the first video is also back, but sped up and overlayed with electric guitars, matching the action of the fierce struggle between the two main antagonists.

More volumes are to follow, and I will definitely be looking forward to the further bloody adventures of Go Nagai's DEVILMAN!•

DEVILMAN—CHAPTER: THE NEW GENESIS (DEBIRUMAN—ATARASHI TANJO-HEN) and DEVILMAN—CHAPTER: DEMON-BIRD SIREN (DEBIRUMAN—YOTORI SHIRENU-HEN). Bandai/Emotion Video. Produced by Kodansha Publishing and King Records. Original Story: Go Nagai. Supervisor: Katsuhisa Kato. Planning: Katsu Uchida. Scenario: Go Nagai and Tsutomu Kurata. Character Design: Kazuo Komatsubara. Music: Kenji Kawai. Animation by O Productions. Directed by Tsutomu Kurata. Released 1988/1989. Running Time: 45 mins. ea.

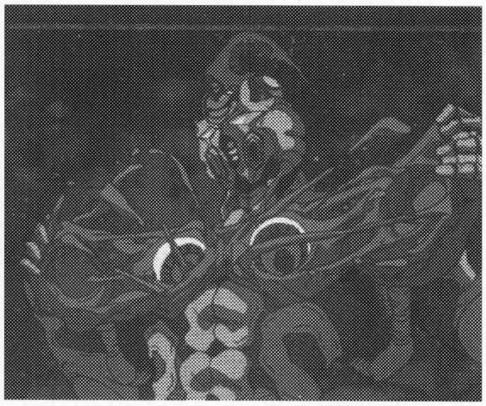
BIO-BOOSTER ARMORED GUYVER

Bio-boosted beasties from Bandai

Bob Johnson

BIO-BOOSTER GUYVER is part one of six OVAs released by Bandai's Emotion Video, it completly buries the original OVA from 1985, which suffered from being just plain bad. The new series, released in 1989, starts off with a fleeing scientist who made off with three "Bio Boosters" which can mutate human beings into ugly, snarling monsters.

When a team of power-suited troopers catch up with the renegade scientist, both the scientist and commander of the pursuit team change into monstrous mutations to do battle over the smuggled, bio-booting devices. The struggle ends in an explosion which destroys two of the bio boosters, and sends the third flying to the feet of Sho and Tetsuro, two high school students hanging out nearby. Sho accidently activates the device and it lashes out, bonding with him as he falls into a nearby lake.



Meanwhile, the mutated commander comes out of the brush, face-to-face with Tetsuro. But, before Tetsuro can be ripped apart, Sho rises from the lake, transformed into The Guyver! At this point, Sho must not only defeat the commander, but one of his men who mutates into an armadillo-type creature with bazookas in its shoulders.

I'm not usually a big fan of origin stories. They usually seem like long intros, with little action. BIO-BOOSTER GUYVER is an exception. It is well paced, with enough action to keep you on the edge of your seat. The animation, though slightly limited compared to many of the OVAs out, is very detailed, and the camera angles used are creative and also serve to move the plot along.

Director Koichi Ishiguro got his start on live-action superhero shows, mainly for P Productions. He produced TIGER 7 and DENJI ZABOGA, directed episodes of SPECTREMAN and served as Producer/Director on LION MARU. This shows on GUYVER, as the format and direction are similar to that of the live action shows, which was probably the intention of the original comicbook's author, Yoshiki Takaya.

The designs of the creatures are well done, though plain compared to some of Go Nagai's wild demonic creations in DEVILMAN. In fact, GUYVER and DEVILMAN seem to have quite a bit in common. A school boy who is changed into a creature and fights against the legions of fellow creatures. Whether these are mutations or demons, the premise is the same. The opening titles are also reminiscent of the end of the DEVILMAN: THE NEW GENESIS, with Guyver running through throngs of monsters, sending them to bloody defeat.

However, Guyver is a welcome relief from robots, espers and gun-toting heroes. Whether a copy of Devilman or a scientifically created mutation, BIO BOOSTER GUYVER will surely entertain and is definitely worth seeing if you get the chance.•

BIO-BOOSTER ARMORED GUYVER—Volume One (KYOSHOKU SOKO GAIBA). Produced by Emotion Video with Frontier/Network. Released by Bandai Video. Created by Yoshiki Takaya. Directed by Koichi Ishiguro. Running time: 45 minutes.

GUZOO

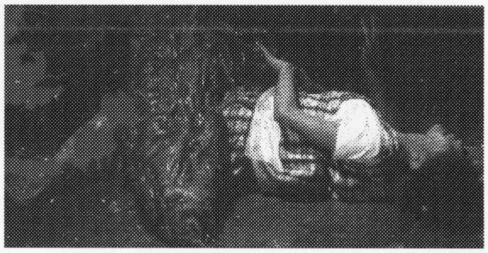
As gooey as its title

August Ragone

A legend of a god-like beast which devores virgins comes to life in this inde- pendent made-for-video movie, which is part-EVIL DEAD, part-THE THING, and part-girlie film, the end result of which is masturbatorial yet obscene.

Four college girls—Minako, Mayumi, Yuka and Katsuko—travel to the countryside for an idyllic summer vacation. They check into an inn run by a cloistered, bespectacled woman, Ms. Kyujo, who tells them she is "conducting research" down in the basement, and they are not to disturb her.

While the girls are enjoying the inn's swimming pool, Ms. Kyujo goes through their things and smashes all of their mirrors—she is interrupted by the scream of Katsuko, whose arm was mysteriously slashed in the middle of the pool. That night, Katsuko sneaks into the kitchen for a drink and is assaulted by a number of tendrils that try to drink her blood from the wall mirror from which they came. Satisfied for now, "Guzoo" retreats. The girls come to her aid and Ms. Kyujo allays their fears by saying that Katsuko was probably attacked by a rat.



The next day, while the others are out, Katsuko checks the mirror which attacked her, and is again assaulted by Guzoo, who sucks her through the mirror to a grisly fate. The girls search for her to no avail, and blame Ms. Kyujo for her disappearance. Taking her keys, the girls find what is in the basement, and after some massive carnage, Minako and Mayumi repel Guzoo by blowing a tune they heard Ms. Kyujo play, with the ocarina from her key chain.

As the house disappears, Guzoo disguises itself as a turtle, and finding him in a brook, the girls bring him back home…

Overall, the film is about average for this type of subject matter—the main thing going for it is some expert lensing and composition, and the grisly special effects. The direction by "Gailah" (naming himself after the evil beast in WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS) is somewhat reminiscent of Dario Agento for its sense of detachment, but falls apart in the final moments—but there is a jarring shock or two along the way. Most of the Japanese made-for-video horror films are similarly achieved and executed; and with the huge success of American gore-films in that country, I'm surprised that bigger and better movies of this type were never made.

GUZOO is subtitled "Part 1" in it's opening credits, and I'll bet that it's sequels went the way of the modern Japanese gore film—unmade.•

GUZOO (GUZUU). Produced by Masuda Co., Ltd.; Producer: Yoji Matsumoto; Planned by Kohsaki Terui; Photography by Eiichi Ozawa; Music by Nozomu Izumimori; Special Art Direction by Junzo Takagi; Special Make-up Effects by Suezo Sugimoto. Cast: Yumiko Ishikawa, Tomoko Maruyama, Naomi Kajitani, Kyoko Komiyama and Hidemi Maruyama. Running Time: 40 mins. Released in 1987 by Rocco Co., Ltd.; Stereo/Hi-Fi (VHS: RV-V01) ¥9,800

TETSUO

Japan's answer to ERASERHEAD

Max Della Mora & Simon Smith

David Lynch's ERASERHEAD is a somewhat overrated film, but saying this, it does contain some excellently imaginative images which could only be derived from the most warped of minds. But with the lack of motivation it becomes tedious, and the images cannot hold the film together for 90 minutes.

The 67 minute film, TETSUO (or IRONMAN), is set with the world condemned to destruction, crumbling to pieces from the results of rust. The place where the titular character lives is a hell, an industrial wasteland in which thread-like white cold edges ooze into warm human flesh, transforming people into iron creatures with the metal cancer: rust.

The story opens with a man jamming a piece of iron into the flesh of his leg. As the wound begins to fester, maggots crawl into the gapping sore. The intensity causes the man to run about screaming, straight into the path of an oncoming car.

Another man, Tetsuo, sits on a bench in a subway waiting for a train. The girl sitting next to him sees a strange bit of metal on the floor near her. The metal contains what looks like a biomechanical creature. She touches the metal and is shocked when it absorbs her entire hand. Terrified, Tetsuo runs away, closely pursued by the girl. She attempts to kill him, by Tetsuo manages to turn the tables on her.

While safely secured in his own home, Tetsuo has an erotic dream in which his girlfriend dances with a giant mechanical penis between her legs. She sexually assaults him, causing him to snap to consciousness, to find her sleeping soundly beside him. Tetsuo's penis turns into a drill, a gory fight ensues and the girl is killed, her blood splattered across his walls.

Day by Day, Tetsuo progressively begins to resemble a machine, a samurai composed of debris. Tetsuo spots the man who he struck with his car on a TV monitor, who is back for revenge.

His aim is to destroy Tetsuo's home, "melting" it with rust, even melting Tetsuo's pet cat. Tetsuo and the rust man battle it out, but ultimately, the two of them unite in order to destroy humanity.

TETSUO doesn't rely heavily on the imaginative side, tending to lean more towards photographic effects, acute camera angles, high-speed photography and superb stop-motion effects.

Don't get take this the wrong way, the film's director/screenwriter, Tsukamoto, does have an extraordinary imagination, and the combination of this with the "speed"-driven plot and photographic effects, the motivation keeps running—not giving you the chance to tire of the film.

As for the soundtrack by Tadashi Ishikawa, it is impossible to fault; it is one of the best pieces of industrial music written since the *Test Department* of the early '80s. The music fits the film practically frame for frame, and with this it's hard to say which was made for which.

TETSUO is a film not to be missed. •

TETSUO aka IRONMAN. A Seabeast Theater Production. Director/Scenario/Executive Producer: Shinya Tsukamoto. Photography: Mitsuhiro Ozaki. Music: Tadashi Ishikawa. Cast: Tomoroo Taguchi, Kyo Fujiwara, Shin Tsujioka, Shinya Tsukamoto. Released 1988. Running Time: 67mins. B&W.

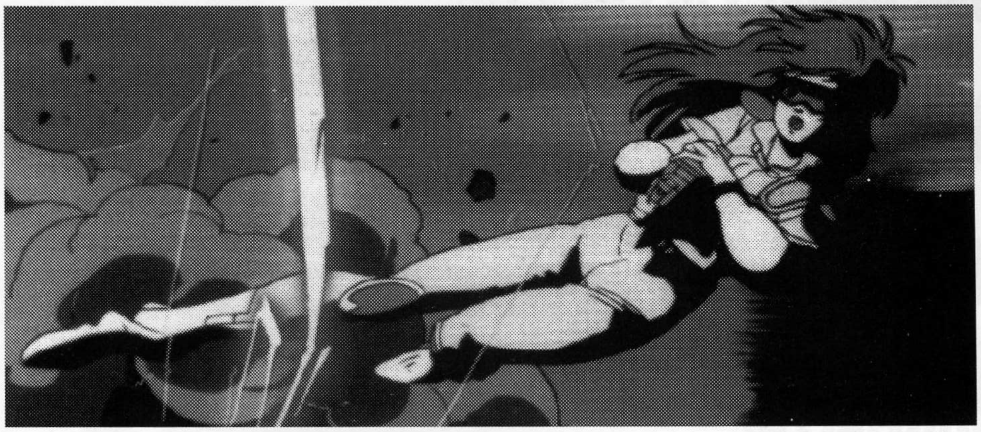
ZILLION

Two boys, a girl and their guns

Bob Johnson

Streamline Pictures, the company that brought you theatrical releases of AKIRA, LAPUTA, LENSMAN and ROBOT CARNIVAL, is now heading into the video market. Their first original video release (aside from AKIRA and it's PRODUCTION REPORT) is actually a 5-part miniseries of English-dubbed episodes of RED LIGHT-BULLET ZILLION.

The story involves an Earth colony, Maris, and its inhabitants' struggle against an alien invader. Leading the fight is a team called "The White Knights." Three of its members are equipped with weapons known as "Zillion Guns." The Zillion gun is a weapon of



unknown origin which contains a "black box" inside it which cannot be analyzed or duplicated. The only three Zillion guns known to exist in the Universe belong to the White Knights.

The ZILLION series itself never did excite me very much, and in its translated state, the concept and story would probably appeal more to fans of mecha-type anime.

The series was created by Ippei Kuri and Tatsunoko Studios which had a very distinct animation-style in the 1960s and 1970s, seen in such series as SPEED RACER, GATCHAMAN, CASHAAN, etc. But in the 1980s, that style started to blend in with the style of the other studios so it was hard to tell them apart.

The animation in ZILLION is definitely good, and there is plenty of action! Also, the three main characters in the White Knights have well developed personalities. The dubbing is very good, up to the normal standards of Streamline. Episodes are uncut, with all the violence left in as well as a sprinkling of swearing. The beginning and end themes, as well as any songs within the episodes are left in their original Japanese language.

Hopefully this will lead to more Japanese animation released directly to video and treated with respect for its adult appeal and not edited for a children's market. The concept and format are great—if Streamline can release more series in the future, this could open up a whole new market for Japanese animation, dependent on the fans' purchasing power, instead of a TV programmer's whim of what will or will not sell to the viewing public. My only personal hope is that they choose more interesting material in the future.•

ZILLION (AKAI-KODAN JIRION). Produced by Tatsunoko Productions. Executive Producer: Ippei Kuri. Producer: Tetsuya Kobayashi. Original Story: Tsunehisa Itoh. Music: Jun Irie. Director: Takayuki Goto. English Adaptation: Carl Macek. American Version Produced by Streamline Pictures. Released 1987 (Japan)/1991 (USA).

ZIPANG

Kaizo Hayashi's super-samurai fantasy

Noriaki Ikeda

This wonderful fantasy film opens with a great fight scene between Jigoku-gokura Maru (played by Masahiro "Gunhed" Takashima) and 110 opponents who all want his head for a hefty reward. I gave them rapturous applause in my mind. The killing of 50 of them in one shot was fun, and the way Takashima dispatched the entire 110, utilizing a wide array of props, was great (am I a nut for counting the number?!) It's easy to see how hard the filmmakers worked on this scene.

"Zipang" is a mysterious country of gold. There the Queen's heart is kept in the Shrine of Ice to make her immortal. There is also her brother, the Warrior King, who has never lost a battle (he is wonderfully played by Mikijiro Hira; his words are like Shakespeare's, and his eyes act terrifcally—a performance that even renders his gold powder make-up unnoticeable). There is also the mysterious man who loves the Queen, and is the only one who knows where Zipang is (played by Shuken of the Niju-Senki Shonen Dokuhon—20th Century Juvenile Reader—who performs enthusiastically half-naked in the begining of the film). It's really romantic when he approaches the Queen with all of his affection. However I like the great couple, Jigoku-goraku Maru (Takashima) and Teppoyuri (Narumi Yasuda) more. I really enjoyed this pair, with their smiles and defiant words (a victory of the script). Yasuda hasn't looked this beautiful in a long time.

The music was composed by Hidehiko Urayama and Yoko Kumagai of Niju-Senki Shonen Dokuhon fame. Using eccentric instruments, they accomplished a great musical effect for an action movie. An "exciting, moving, entertaining Chanbara (Sword Fight) action-drama" which was the goal of director Kaizo Hayashi, has been at least 80 percent accomplished. People who think that these new directors make only minor films, see ZIPANG by all means. I felt great after seeing it.•

ZIPANG (JIPANGU). A Toho Film. Music: Hidehiko Urayama and Yoko Kumagai. Director: Kaizo Hayashi. Starring: Masahiro Takashima, Narumi Yasuda, Shuken, Mikijiro Hira. Released 1990.

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In Memoriam

ICHIRO ARISHIMA

Curtian call for the Japanese Chaplin

The premature July 1987 passing of Ichiro Arishima robbed the Japanese cinema of one of its deftest and most unique actors. Though equally capable of dramatic roles (his last TV movie, about a married couple in their twilight years, was specially rebroadcast the evening after he died), Arishima's main claim to fame was as the most brilliant physical comedian Japan had seen since the prewar reign of Enoken. A seasoned veteran of over 50 years in show business, Arishima also had an uncanny aura of pathos about him, which invariably won him tremendous audience sympathy. His characters emerged victorious from whatever misfortunes life chose to place in these characters' way. He was even likened to the great Charlie Chaplin in his deft ability to evoke both laughter and tears from his audience.

Born on March 1, 1916 in Nagoya, Tadao Oshima (Arishima's real name) was orphaned in his teens when both of his parents died. Tadao subsequently entered the theater world, an artform he loved since childhood. In 1936, he made the move to Tokyo and into a well-known theatrical company in Shinjuku. Over the next ten years, he moved from one troupe to another, and in 1947, he landed a contract with Shochiku Studios. His film debut, WAKAI HI NO CHI WA MOETE, premiered that year.

Celebrity status eluded him for several years, until he was grabbed up by Toho Studios in 1955. From that point on, Arishima was featured in two highly successful film series, the "Wakadaisho" (The Young Guy) films starring Yuzo Kayama and the series that immortalized Arishima was Hisaya Morishige's "Shacho" movies, which featured the comedy team, The Crazy Cats—marking him as a household name and a respected actor. Recently, he was involved in both the television series and stage plays of ABAREMBO SHOGUN, becoming an audience favorite playing a youthful shogun's elderly advisor/surrogate father.

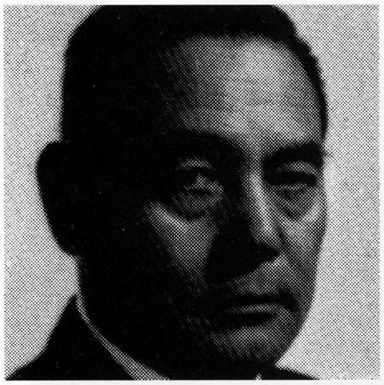
His work graces very few Toho genre films, including Senkichi Taniguchi's ADVENTURES OF TAKLA MAKLAN, but most notably in Ishiro Honda's KING KONG VS. GODZILLA and Taniguchi's THE LOST WORLD OF SINBAD, performances illustrating his great versatility as well as his wit. Unforgettable in KONG as the puffed-up promoter Tako, Arishima stole the show from a very formidable batch of costars. Perhaps his finest moment in the film (cut from the U.S. version) finds him picking a fight with an onlooker who thinks Kong's a wimp compared to Godzilla.

In SINBAD, made up to look far older than he ever did in life, he played a first-class sorcerer downgraded to third-class due to his lustful "blood." His physical tics and mannerisms were ideally utilized, and his scenes with another great actor, Eisei Amamoto (as, aternately, the witch Granny and the sorcerer in disguise!), were absolutely electric.

Other genre appearances include the title role of MY FRIEND DEATH with Frankie Sakai; no doubt the physical contrast between the two is part of the reason Arishima made so many pictures with the heavyset comedian.

Akira Kubo recently noted the number of his old Toho colleagues who died while just in their middle age. "I guess the best die young," he sighed. Fortunately we still have a great many of the best still with us, as well as the priceless filmic legacies of those who have left. Arishima is gone, but will never be forgotten.•

—GUY TUCKER



SUSUMU FUJITA

Twilight has fallen for the Old General

What one remembers most about SANSHIRO SUGATA (and its underrated sequel) isn't the brisk direction of Akira Kurosawa or the stirring sequences of judo. One remembers Susumu Fujita in closeup, blocking an opponent's thrust, and giving forth the most innocently charming of smiles. SUGATA made Fujita an overnight star, and no wonder—his excitingly physical presence and the joy he was able to project through sheer action is comparable to few actors before or since (Douglas Fairbanks Sr. and Sean Connery spring most easily to mind).

Sugata is the least corrupt of Kurosawa's heroes (though he tries—one hilarious scene in Part II finds him breaking as many of his master's rules at one time as he can), and Fujita one of the most delightful figures in his ensemble. Though cast against type in THOSE WHO TREAD ON THE TIGER'S TAIL (1945)—the General is usually played as a far older character in the Kabuki play—Kurosawa's strategy pays off: fresh-faced Fujita's seeming likability actually maximized the suspense of whether or not such a man might expose Lord Benkei for whom he actually is.

Fujita (born in Fukuoka Prefecture on January 8,1912) is best remembered in the West for these Kurosawa films, which also include a wonderful cameo in YOJIMBO as "Homma, the ex-yojimbo" ousted by Mifune (an in-joke reference to Mifune's replacement of Fujita as the main protagonist in Kurosawa's ouevre?). Here, Fujita scampers down the road while Mifune watches; twice he pauses, turns, and gives one of those ingratiating grins. Mifune doesn't turn him in; who'd have so black a heart? Fujita is one of the few Japanese actors who seems not to have played a villain often, and although he played Toshio Mifune's ruthless nemesis Jubei Matsugoro in Senkichi Taniguchi's KUNISADA CHUJI—the next closest he came was as the redoubtable General Makabe in THE HIDDEN FORTRESS (perhaps his most scene-stealing role of all).

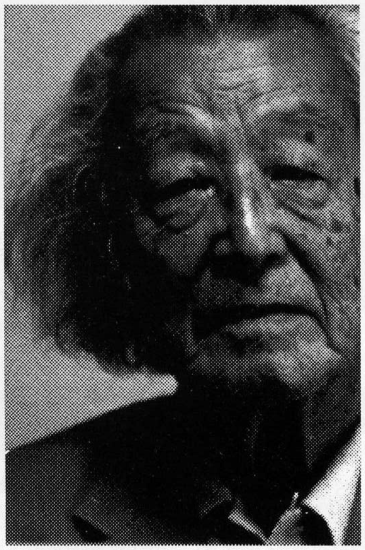
Charming as was his screen image, Fujita could be a hardliner in his business life; in 1947 he was one of the "Flag of Ten"—ten top Toho stars who, disgusted with the studio's treatment of its employees, went on strike and temporarily deserted to found the Shin Toho company.

Though he appeared in numerous special effects films: General Morita in THE MYSTERIANS (CHIKYU BOEIGUN—Honda, 1957); Defense Commander in ATRAGON (KAITEI GUNKAN—Honda, 1963); Countermeasure Commander in GODZILLA VS. THE THING (MOSURA TAI GOJIRA—Honda, 1964); Osaka Police Chief in FRANKENSTEIN CONQURES THE WORLD (FURANKENSHUTAIN TAI BARAGON—Honda,1965) and numerous war films; Fujita is best appreciated in DOGORA—THE SPACE MONSTER (UCHU DAI-KAIJU DOGORA—Honda, 1964), as cheerful General Iwasa, playing against the equally great Nobuo Nakagawa's tetchy "old soldier." He also had supporting roles in the Tsuburaya Production television series ULTRA Q (#3 "Gift From Space"), ULTRAMAN (#2 "Blast the Invaders", both in1966), a semi-regular role in ULTRA SEVEN (1967—68) as Colonel Yamaoka, and the TDF commander in RETURN OF ULTRAMAN (#5 "Two Giant Monsters Attack Tokyo" and #6 "Monsters vs. MAT"), among others. Fujita continued acting to the last; he contributed a cameo to the opening of Juzo Itami's A TAXING WOMAN, as the owner of a small market.

Hail and farewell, old soldier. It's a smaller world without you.•

—GUY TUCKER

In Memoriam



SUIHO TAGAWA

Norakuro cartoon creator passes away

Cartoonist Suiho Tagawa, who created the popular prewar comic character "Norakuro," died December 12, 1989 of liver cancer at Kitazato University Hospital in Sagamihara, Kanagawa Prefecture. He was 90. Tagawa, who is survived by his wife Junko, was born in Honjo, Tokyo in 1899. His first job after graduating from art school was as a woodblock print artist.

Tagawa, whose real name was Chutaro Takamizawa, then became a writer of rakugo stories. Through rakugo writing he met a publisher who suggested he try his hand at drawing cartoons. He broke into the professional world of cartooning when he began publishing *Norakuro* (Black Stray) in serial form for a boys' magazine in 1931.

The work, the story of a dog called "Kurokichi" who enlists for military service, entertained comic lovers for 11 years until 1942. Norakuro is regarded by many as the foremost creator of Japanese prewar comics.

After completing a sequel to *Norakuro* in 1980, Tagawa became involved in copper-plate printmaking and the study of characature drawing. His work on the latter subject produced two books.

A recipient of many cultural awards, Tagawa is also known as a teacher to many noted postwar cartoonists, including Yu Takida and Machiko Hasegawa.

Artistically, Tagawa is to be survived by his three students—Akaoni Yamane, Aooni Yamane, and Tekemaru Nagata—who received authorization to inherit the Norakuro copyright from the summer of 1990.

Assuring that Norakuro will carry on the name of his creator, Suiho Tagawa, to many future generations of Japanese comic fans to come. •

CRANK UP

Who Do We Cover?

So as the editor of this magazine, what do you pay the most attention to? Which studio really represents Japanese fantasy?

Toho obviously started it all. When Godzilla first stomped across movie screens in 1954, Japanese fantasy suddenly became a viable commercial commodity throughout the world. A string of fantasy streamed out of Japan for two decades without a break. Now, with the impending release of GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH, Toho is back in the monster business.

Tsuburaya Productions brought us ULTRAMAN. Admittedly, there was an almost ten year absence in the 1980s of an Ultra Series, but with ULTRAMAN—TOWARDS THE FUTURE, that may all change. Aside from the Ultramen, Tsuburaya produced a number of other literally larger-than-life superheroes, including MIRRORMAN, FIREMAN and JUMBORG ACE. Tsuburaya Pro was also prolific in sf/horror productions such as OPERATION: MYSTERY!, MIGHTY JACK and STARWOLF. There is still a lot about Tsuburaya Productions that fans want to know about.

Daiei. The studio that produced the Gamera and Majin movie series, also produced a number of handsomely produced horror films such as THE HAUNTED CASTLE and DEMON WARFARE. So even Daiei's coverage cannot be limited to the turtle and the stone-face alone.

Even Shintoho delivered a number of recently acclaimed horror films (THE GHOST OF YOTSUYA), besides creating the flipping and flying Supergiant (aka Starman).

Toei is probably the most underrated studio of the majors. This can mainly be attributed to the lack of exposure their productions have received in the US—although we did get to see JOHNNY SOKKO; though we should dismiss DYNAMAN's (thankfully, short) bastardized reign on cable TV...

However, Toei has been responsible for most of the live-action on Japanese television. They brought us PRINCE OF SPACE and INVASION OF THE NEPTUNE MEN, making them the molders of the Japanese superhero genre. Riding a boom of popularity from the '70s, Toei continues two popular series today. The Sentai Series, which began with GORANGER in 1975, and still is exciting viewers with its most recent installment, JETMAN. The most popular of Toei's superhero series without question is KAMEN RIDER. Shotaro Ishinomori and Tohru Hirayama's bug-eyed motorcycle heroes have generated nine separate teleseries, adding up to over 450 episodes! It is safe to assume that they have not rode off into the sunset with the conclusion of KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX.

Toei changed the direction of Japanese superheroes in the 1970s and the face of American spfx in the 1980s... Rob Bottin's designs of Robocop are based on Toei's ground-breaking 1982 teleseries SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN (which in itself created a live-action/spfx revival in Japan). This makes Toei the most prolific producers in Japanese spfx tv history.

So, who do we cover? Well, all of them of course! *Markalite* was created to cover the entire spectrum of Japanese fantasy and present subject matter ignored by Western publications. In our next issue, we start our extensive Toei coverage with a feature on the making of the seminal 1971 classic, KAMEN RIDER! What more could you want? Animation? Yeah, well... we've got that too.

Get ready, hang onto your Atomic Heat Guns, Kamen Rider Belts, Change-Bracelets and Beta Capsules, there's a lot of action ahead!

Tsuzuku...

Bob Johnson

MARKALITE TRIVIA CONTEST #3: "PASSING SHIPS"

Our contest, a continuing feature in *Markalite*, tests how much you really know about the films and the people who make them. To compensate for driving you insane, we will give out a prize(s) to the entrant who scores highest of all submittals. Each fully correct answer receives a "10" and all partial answers receive a "5"—re: Q: What is the name of Akira Takarada's character in GOJIRA? A: Ogata. (5 points) or A: Hideto Ogata. (10 points); two part questions are double points, and so on—Good luck!

1. Name the ship sunk during the opening moments of GODZILLA—KING OF THE MONSTERS! And what is it's name in English?

2. What was the name of the "ghost ship" in THE H-MAN, and what real-life ship was it based on?

3. The doomed voyagers in MATANGO, were shipwrecked in which yatch? What does it's name mean?

4. Frakenstein was in the path of a ferry in FRANKENSTEIN CONQURES THE WORLD, name it.

5. Name the ship sunk by Gailah at the opening of WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS. And what's the in-joke in it's name?

Deadline for submittals is October 15, 1990. The decisions of our staff are final. Winners and the correct answers will be posted in our next issue (available November/December 1991).

ANSWERS FROM TRIVIA#2: "The Magic Begins" and "So Deep is My Love"; 2. She sang "The Words Get Stuck in My Throat" in WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS—Mark Mothersbaugh aka "Booji Boy", covered the song with his band DEVO; 3. "Furusato" (My Home); 4. "Infant No Izumi"; 5. Pair Bambi or The Bambi Pair.

MARKALITE

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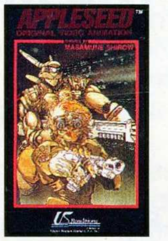

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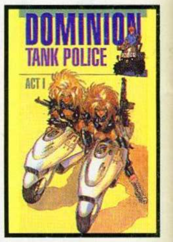

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